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# FITTING YOURSELF FOR BUSINESS

*What the Employer Wants beyond Skills*

By

ELIZABETH GREGG MacGIBBON

AUTHOR OF "MANNERS IN BUSINESS"

*Consulting Editor:* FREDERICK G. NICHOLS

*Second Edition*  
*Second Impression*

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## **FITTING YOURSELF FOR BUSINESS**

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***Printed in the United States of America***

*To my son*

GREGG LINVILLE MACGIBBON

whose beginning experiences in business  
provided invaluable material for this book



## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

When *Fitting Yourself for Business* was written, there were three applicants for every available office job. It was therefore important that qualified business graduates have advance information on how to prepare for office work and how to get their first positions. The book was written for that purpose.

During 1941, however, the situation changed sharply. Even before our nation became involved in war, preparations for defense began to take up the slack. Work piling up in Government offices brought about a lowering of Civil Service standards, and anyone who could type thirty-five words a minute and who would pay her way to Washington had a good job.

On top of increased Government need for office help, mushrooming war industries throughout the country wiped out unemployment practically everywhere. For the next few years the shoe was on the other foot; jobs were seeking applicants and not necessarily qualified ones.

During these wartime years the author was in the thick of it. As personnel coordinator for Marinship Corporation in Sausalito, California, it was the author's responsibility to keep a thousand office positions filled. Because of the urgency of the ship-building program and the scarcity of help in the San Francisco Bay area the company hired service wives and others whom they knew to be transient. The net result was that the same position was frequently filled three times within six months. With such a turnover, during two and a half years the author actually interviewed over 20,000 applicants to employ around 4,000.

At the time the first edition of *Fitting Yourself for Business* was published, the appearance, conduct, and attitude of an applicant in an interview were all-important; but under the pressure of wartime demands, interviewing standards were necessarily lowered. Many a girl who knew little and cared less about what business expected of her in that first interview was received with open arms.

Just as standards for the first interview were temporarily lowered, so was the required ability in office skills. While

employers still hopefully sought those who could type seventy words a minute, they became resigned to accepting considerably less in performance. Moreover, although standards sank, salaries skyrocketed and the inexperienced found themselves starting at salaries in excess of what experienced workers received in normal times. It was a heyday for the unqualified beginner.

Even before the war ended, a change was apparent. Office workers who had left their peace-time jobs for patriotism and better salaries began planning to return as soon as hostilities ceased. Security and prospects of advancement now loomed as all-important. Thoughtful students, sensing the inevitable raising of standards, began again to plan for business training following high school.

For a time the postwar office picture was obscure. Obviously, if all the girls and women who worked in offices during the war remained in business and if jobs decreased, there would be an oversupply of office workers. This would lead to lowered salaries. Such gloomy prophesies have not been fulfilled. Today, nearly two years after VJ Day, there is still a wide-spread scarcity of skilled office workers, with the result that salaries in many cities are well above the wartime peak. This highly desirable condition is due to several factors. Many women have returned permanently to home life; government employment has not been noticeably decreased; and beginners with scant preparation are no longer crowding into office jobs.

A return to prewar office standards, and basic common sense are causing young men and women to fit themselves adequately for careers in business. These young people know that the high salaries are being paid for excellence in the required skills, for experience, and for those personal traits that employers want in addition to skills. Originally written to help prewar students get the elusive first job, *Fitting Yourself for Business* has been reedited to perform the same service for today's beginners.

ELIZABETH GREGG MACGIBBON

LOS GATOS, CALIF.,  
April, 1947.

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

It is axiomatic that schools that prepare young people for business must be at all times informed as to what employers expect from them.

A few years ago business asked that the preparation in skills be more thorough. As a result the business schools upgraded their training in skills to meet the more rigorous demands.

Now, with the nationwide employment reservoir full to overflowing with well-equipped young men and women, business says that the best of training in skills is not enough. Employers have raised competition to a new and higher level by asking that applicants for positions be outstanding in appearance, personality, attitude, habits, and viewpoint, and that they know their way about in a business environment.

In many business colleges and schools the work of meeting these demands has been well begun. Students are being taught how to get and keep jobs, how to improve their dress and grooming, and how to develop desirable attitudes and personality for business. The greater ease with which graduates of such courses have been placed has proved the value and the timeliness of the instruction.

But so far this work has had to depend largely upon the inspiration of teachers who have seen what was needed and who have pioneered in spite of a discouraging lack of material for their teaching. These forward-looking educators have wanted greatly to hear direct from business regarding current employment standards. It has been a case of a course in search of a textbook.

This book has been written with the purpose of outlining specifically these supplementary things business now expects of beginners. As an experienced executive the author has endeavored to interpret the viewpoint of employers, not as



something unreasonable but as what, through trial and error, they have found they need in workers, in addition to skills.

*Fitting Yourself for Business* is based upon years of experience in hiring and training personnel in close association with the management of various business enterprises. But the book might never have been written if the author had not later met thousands of young people, the country over, when lecturing on job getting and holding. This face-to-face contact with present and prospective office employees during a six-year period made the author acutely aware of the beginner's placement problems and the difficulty of employed workers in making satisfactory occupational adjustments.

If this book, developed out of a wealth of experience and a devoted interest in both youth and business, can help the beginner better to adapt himself to his future occupation, this will be adequate recompense for the year of concentrated effort that has gone into these pages. It is the author's sincere hope that *Fitting Yourself for Business* will help many young people to cross, with flying colors, that gap between school and employment which so often looms before them as a seemingly unbridgeable chasm.

ELIZABETH GREGG MACGIBBON

NEW YORK, N.Y.,  
January, 1941.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is deeply indebted to many friends and acquaintances in business education for their interest and encouragement in the formulation of this text. To mention only a few: in the early planning stages, Elaine Barker, Beatrice Levy, and Rose Vecherelli of the Roger Ludlow High School, Fairfield, Connecticut, were most helpful; later Margaret Hickey of Miss Hickey's Training School for Secretaries, St. Louis, read certain chapters and gave valuable suggestions and criticism.

On the business side, thanks are due to many employers and personnel directors for sharing with the author the benefit of their experience with young people just entering, or already in, business. The Transcription Supervisors' Association of New York was cooperative in making available its Personality Chart.

The book owes much to the sympathetic understanding and careful editorial work of Alice Finch with whom the author was associated in the San Francisco office of the Honig Cooper Company.



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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Vocational training is incomplete until satisfactory occupational adjustment has been made. Some make this adjustment easily while others try many jobs before achieving it. Not a few fail entirely. Even students whose general education and technical training have been identical have widely different experiences establishing themselves in satisfactory employment. It is generally agreed that one who would enter upon a business career with reasonable assurance of success must have acquired essential skills, possess a goodly amount of understanding of business principles, and be the kind of person whose inherent or developed traits are adequate to the strains and stresses of business life. But these three qualifications are not enough to ensure satisfactory initial and permanent occupational adjustments. One thing more is essential. It may be called *occupational intelligence*.

Good business schools, public or private, pride themselves on the adequacy of their skill training and their related courses. Graduates of these schools should be reasonably competent practitioners in their first jobs. They should possess some understanding of the total significance of the routine in which they have a part. Courses already available are meeting these two needs.

As to the third success factor, personality, good schools have made a substantial beginning in the direction of its development. But they have been handicapped by a dearth of suitable instructional material for use in developing well-integrated personalities as distinguished from unrelated personal traits. Any attempt to supply such instructional aid leads to the conclusion that business traits reveal their goodness or badness only in occupational situations, and that it too often is the element of surprise



in unfamiliar situations which permits otherwise dormant bad traits, or underdeveloped good traits, to get in their work.

To eliminate the element of surprise by developing occupational intelligence through the study of more or less difficult and unfamiliar common business situations the preparation of this text was undertaken. It was clear to the author from the outset that its content and method, having to do with most common personal business relationships, are especially suited to the development of well-integrated personality as well as to the development of readiness to meet situations as they arise at the point of employment, on the initial job, and on later promotional levels. So the book serves a double purpose. It furnishes a sound basis for personality development, while at the same time it acquaints the student with what an employer expects of the novice in business and shows him how to meet those expectations most effectively.

The natural approach to the problem of readying the student for his first occupational contact is found in a single query: What does the employer want? An adequate answer to this query affords a sound basis for a course designed to help graduates approach a prospective employer with confidence and to fit into a suitable job without a trace of friction, uncertainty, or clumsiness.

From career planning at the outset to winning promotions after initial occupational adjustment, nothing that will help the student make the most of himself is overlooked in *Fitting Yourself for Business*. Dress, manners, voice, emotional and psychological aids to good conduct, proper regard for rights of others, and numerous other components of a competent worker are given deserved emphasis.

Difficult business situations that call for the utmost of judgment, tact, and skill in dealing with matters involving prospective employers, employees, bosses, coworkers, customers, or clients are stressed throughout the course. The author recognizes that maladjustment often results from ignorance of new and puzzling situations such as are sure to confront the beginner.

She knows what employers expect of him. Her book abounds in discussion of those situations in which trouble often arises and of reasonable demands beyond mere operative skill which an employer may make. The result is that the element of newness and surprise which causes the novice to do or say the wrong thing is eliminated. Fortified with a goodly amount of occupational understanding the graduate meets even difficult situations successfully at the outset of his career and thus avoids the floundering which too often precedes satisfactory adjustment.

That Mrs. MacGibbon's long and varied experience as employer, personnel director, and trainer of workers has enabled her to choose wisely business situations that lend themselves most effectively to the achievement of the primary aims of the course should be obvious to those who examine this text. She long has been recognized as an authority in her field. Her writings and teaching are sound in theory and practice. Her text is rich in illustrative material drawn from long practical experience and includes exercises and problems that should challenge the student and stimulate him to his best effort.

Placement at the end of training is every vocational school's responsibility. Nothing gives a school manager more satisfaction than to know that in the training of his students he has anticipated employers' wants and thus ensured for his graduates the success they have a right to expect. This text meets a real need in making the transition between school and employment and therefore should merit most careful consideration by those who select instructional material for vocational business courses.

FREDERICK G. NICHOLS.



# FITTING YOURSELF FOR BUSINESS

## CHAPTER I

### PLANNING YOUR BUSINESS LIFE

A friend of mine makes a hobby of building boats. He has already built several, and right now he is working on a seagoing craft. He dreams of living on it during the summer months each year, when his regular job doesn't occupy him.

This man is an engineer, so, of course, he has drawn a plan for his boat. But even so, now and then in his reading or as he works, he sees a way to do a better job. At that point he changes his plan to fit his newer knowledge.

My friend knew, when he began, it would take him two years working in his spare time to complete his boat and he knows just what it will cost and what it will be worth when it is finished. Already the boat is insured for \$1,200, which is the actual cost of the material plus the time he has put in on it up to now. When the boat is finished, he tells me, it will be worth \$6,000 if he wants to sell it. He figures that amount will represent his time and costs. It is also the market price of this type of craft.

Perhaps this dream boat would have gone to sea just as gallantly if my friend hadn't made such definite plans. But along the way there would have been mistakes and disappointments, wasted time and effort. The same is true of your approach to a business life. A definite plan for your business craft will smooth your way.

### PLANNING IS FUN

Perhaps you think you don't know how to make a plan for your business life. There is nothing very difficult about it. Think of the plan you probably have right now for next year's vacation. Or the plan—call it a dream if you young women like—for your wedding, if, as, and when. And what young man doesn't plan for that car of his own no matter how remote the actual purchase seems? This sort of planning is fun. In fact, it's a very real part of your enjoyment in the things you are planning for. Planning your business life can be fun, too. It will give zest to every step you take.

### WHOSE PLAN SHALL IT BE?

Of course, your plan to be successful must be *your own*, not something your parents have wanted for you since you were a tot. Parents sometimes have a bad habit of settling their children's futures for them. Dad may have wanted to be a doctor but for financial reasons couldn't make the grade, so Junior must study medicine. Or perhaps Mother had a secret longing to become an actress, and so Jane, being so graceful and pretty, just must go on the stage!

This is merely a way many parents have of compensating through their children for unfulfilled dreams of their own. If you have no talents along the lines suggested, you won't be in the least undutiful or disloyal if you hold firmly to your own ideas and preferences for your future. The first principle of success in any job is to like it for its own sake. It's a rare person who makes good in something for which he has no flair.

Again, there may be a store or a contracting business in the family. What more natural than a plan to have John or Harry take it over? Sometimes, when jobs are scarce, a family business is a godsend to sons and even to daughters. Often, as the younger generation progresses in the family field, everyone concerned is pleased and happy. John makes good and Dad is proud. But when a young person with other interests and

abilities is forced into a situation planned for him by his parents, Discontent and Failure rear their ugly heads.

On the other hand, nothing can be so ambition-provoking as the plan you make for yourself. It may not be a very big plan, especially if it's the very first you make. It may be little more than a wish. Something like, "I hope to work in a small office where I'll have plenty of responsibility and then I'll work up to having full charge of the office." But because the plan is your own, you'll take pride in helping it to materialize.

Any objective you make for yourself will keep you striving. It will create a divine discontent that will force you toward the job for which you are best suited and will keep you alive to the possibilities of promotion. It will keep you alert, keen, and ambitious. You will shift your direction to favor it as you see your way more clearly. And as you grow your plan will grow.

If you will make such a plan for yourself, you will have already taken the first step on the road to success. You will already stand out from the crowd. A survey of 10,000 people, young and old, showed that only one out of twenty ever had had any definite aim in life. Practically all those who had achieved success stated they had had a definite goal and had done everything possible to reach it.

### **THE WAY OF THE NONPLANNER**

While I was gathering material for this book, I worked as an interviewer in a New York employment agency. It was amazing how few of the applicants with whom I came in contact knew where they were going or why. Even of the limited number who had plans, many were merely indulging in daydreams and wishful thinking. Often, as I studied the application blank of a young woman who had been working a year or two, I would ask, "What is your plan for yourself?" More often than not her answer would be a look of blank amazement.

"Plan? How can I have a plan? I have to eat. I'll take anything I can get," she would say.

Of course she will, poor youngster! The time to plan is before just any job, in order to eat, has become urgent.

When I found I was talking to someone who was living away from home and was worried about paying for her room and meals, I did what I could to get her "anything" right away. But I tried never to let such a young woman leave my office without attempting to interest her in making a plan.

"Now that you have worked for a while and have tried out several things, it might be wise to decide what work you like most and are best suited for," I would say to her. "As soon as you are not so hard-pushed for a mere living, why not try to get into the kind of work you like? Then stick to it and work to improve yourself in it. This changing from one thing to another is wasting your best years, years when you ought to be making good in a firm where you can progress."

Here is a typical employment agency file card, showing scattered experience. It fairly shrieks for a plan. Let us say this is the work record of Mary Smith:

	First position	Second position	Last position
Type of business..	Insurance company	Department store	Lumber company
Work done.....	Typing and clerical	Selling hosiery	Switchboard-receptionist
Salary.....	\$15 week	\$17 week	\$18 week
Time there.....	7 months	4 months	6 months
Reason for leaving.	Force cut	Work slack. Let out newest employees	Firm went out of business

The reasons Mary gave for leaving these jobs were probably correct, since all indicate situations that frequently occur. But what Mary did not realize was that if she had been doing exceptionally good work, someone else probably would have been fired in the first two instances, and she would have been kept on and eventually promoted. "Practically a year and a half lost," is

what this record said to me. Though Mary had had some experience, the work she had done was not sufficiently outstanding or of long enough duration in one position to be worth much when it came to getting another job. What Mary needed was a *plan*.

As I recall Mary's case, she told me she had had a plan in school and in her first job. Like most other girls who take commercial courses, her ambition was to become a private secretary. This is more often a wish than a plan. And just between ourselves, it's a wish easily fostered by the glamorous secretaries one sees in the movies—those lovely girls wearing \$150 tailored suits and smart hats, who are so wise in the ways of Big Business and who eventually become the brilliant, socially successful wives of their bosses. If it only were like that!

#### WISHFUL THINKING IS NOT PLANNING

A plan should be something realizable, based on known facts and conditions. Often girls who think they have secretarial ambitions have no idea of the successive, laborious steps they must take before they can achieve their end. If they do know and start out sensibly, making everything grist to their mill, such an ambition is by no means unrealizable. And its rewards are well worth striving for.

But there are not, and there never will be enough openings for private secretaries to fulfill all the rosy hopes of all the wishful thinkers. By far the greatest number of office workers occupy clerical positions of one sort or another, and many young people, trained for office work, find success and happiness in some other field—retail selling, for example.

So, in making your business plan, why limit yourself to office work? Instead, why not appraise your ability and capacity, as well as the requirements of various business positions, and see where you will fit in best?

#### STOP! LOOK! LISTEN! AND ASK!

There are literally scores of different kinds of positions in the business world, with many interesting variations of each. Your



background of office training will be of great value to you, whether you actually use it in a strictly office capacity or not. Now, while you are still in school, is the time to take a canter over the field and learn as much as you can about the variety of positions available. Who knows—your best opportunity may lie in some other direction than stenographic work leading to a secretaryship. An office may well be your starting point, but it need not be the end point of your business career.

Your sources of information are innumerable, and you should avail yourself of them all. Begin with your friends and acquaintances who have jobs. Ask questions. But don't be fooled by their experience and their rapid advancement during wartime years. Be practical.

Business is a fascinating topic of conversation to most Americans, and almost everyone has some slant he will be glad to contribute if you ask him. And above all, consult with your teachers regarding your vocational plans. They know you and your aptitudes, and their advice will be most valuable.

Again, check with your teachers regarding any information you have picked up here and there, so as to be sure of your facts. Inadequate information or misinformation results too often in impractical plans. Several years ago I counseled a group of senior students at Stanford University. These girls were hoping to go into some phase of business and were seeking information and guidance regarding it. A number of them expressed a desire to enter personnel work, but, to my surprise, few of them had any but the vaguest idea what it was all about. Some of them said, naively, that they thought personnel work was telling people what to do, and they knew they would like that! They had gleaned a bit of executive experience from honorary offices in campus affairs—enough, they thought, to skip the difficult lower rungs of the ladder to executive positions for which they would be well paid.

I spent considerable time that autumn explaining the various kinds of personnel work—industrial, office, store, and educational. I also explained frequently and at length that business was not

interested in personnel directors who had not been through the hard grind of the more lowly positions occupied by the employees they were to direct. How, for instance, could a personnel director teach other girls how to sell, if she herself had never sold behind a counter? These college girls were highly intelligent. In spite of their vagueness, they were groping toward definite plans. Many of them, I am sure, have since found themselves.

In contrast, later the same year I was engaged to spend a week at the University of Arkansas. In addition to giving talks on *How to Get a Job*, *Occupational Outlets for the Recent College Graduate*, and *What the Employer Wants*, I was available to the women students for individual vocational counseling.

Many of these girls had come from small towns and remote Arkansas farms. Yet they had much more definite, well-thought-out plans than the students at Stanford whose opportunities had been greater. The most outstanding example of this was a beautiful girl of nineteen who was graduating that spring. She told me she had prepared to teach band in high school. Naturally musical, she had taken what courses in music she could, had acquired her teaching credentials, and was, as far as I could see, launching into an uncrowded field.

### **OPPORTUNITY ALWAYS KNOCKING**

"But," perhaps you are saying to yourself, "how can I make a plan when jobs are scarce and opportunities are limited?" Or "How can I hope to make an intelligent plan without any experience of the business world?"

I admit that jobs are scarce at times, but not that opportunities are limited. I also admit that college, high-school, and business-school graduates often lack information about occupations and possible openings. But none of these is an insurmountable obstacle. When jobs are scarce, there is more reason than ever to have an objective. With so many planless persons floundering about, there is all the more opportunity for those who know where they are going. As for information, as I have already said, make your daily contacts count. Moreover, any good

school or city library is stocked with excellent up-to-date books on various occupations. And you needn't be above asking for all the advice you can get. Making a plan of your own doesn't mean you must do without help. Get all the help you can from people who have been through the mill, and make the most of it.

Another type of student, overly optimistic about his or her opportunities, considers planning unnecessary. These young people feel that all they need to do is to finish their schooling and start right off well up on the ladder of success. This is especially true of those college graduates who think their academic training is an open-sesame to jobs. They are headed for some hard knocks! Beginners should and usually do begin at the bottom. And as a matter of fact, it is far more agreeable to begin way down and go up than to begin at the top and go down.

#### PRACTICAL PLANNING FOR BEGINNERS

Here are some suggestions to guide you toward practical planning. Get out a piece of paper and write down the questions in order. Then write your answer facing each question.

Which of the subjects I have studied in school do I like the best?

Which of the skills I am now acquiring am I best in?

Which would I like most to use on an actual job? Right now? Eventually?

After you have answered these questions, make a list of popular combinations of some of the skills that you would find interesting. Bookkeeping and shorthand. Telephone operating and typing. Filing and typing. Your first job will undoubtedly be a combination one. After you have worked a while you may be able to specialize, but that is seldom possible in your first job.

Select a beginning job or two; and, if there is a particular field in which you would like to work, such as aviation, fashion, architecture, real estate, or lumber, find out, if you can, whether these businesses employ inexperienced workers in the positions you have selected.

All this information is important to your present and future planning. For example, it might easily reveal that you have to shift fields or get into your chosen field by another route or a different combination job.

### TESTING YOUR PLAN HELPS

Try-out experiences are an excellent means of finding out whether you actually like the work you thought you would like. This is more true of vocations than of positions such as we are now discussing. Many a college student's well-laid plan has disappeared in confusion after its originator has tested it out during a summer vacation. For instance, college girls with high ideals and some study of sociology often think they want to go into social service work. But a hot summer spent in a slum settlement house is enough to show them that the hardships of case work are not for them. How much better to find this out before spending years getting ready for this occupation!

For many boys who went direct from school into the armed services, the work to which they were assigned in the army or the navy served as a tryout. John Cox, recently discharged, enrolled in an engineering school because of his road- and bridge-building experience with the army engineers. Other boys have chosen radio, transportation, or supply because of what they saw of these fields while working for Uncle Sam. But sometimes the trial experience in the service resulted negatively. Robert Hart, with department store aspirations, worked in a Government warehouse in India and decided he didn't like merchandise in any form.

On the home front, war-industry jobs have been excellent try-outs for many students who have returned to school with experience from which to plan their future.

So, if you can, get some sort of try-out job. But if you can't, take consolation in the fact that your first job is likely to be little more than a try-out experience. Nor need this seem discouraging or disappointing. It may be the very best thing for your plan.

## ROBERT JONES, FUTURE SALESMAN

Robert Jones thought he wanted to be a bookkeeper and eventually an accountant. But, when he finished business school, no one seemed to be in need, just then, of an inexperienced bookkeeper. At least Bob couldn't get in touch with any such job. His school employment bureau sent him to be interviewed by the employment manager of a manufacturing company where there was a job open for a general clerk. Bob was just what this firm wanted—a clean-cut young fellow with good training. When he was offered the job Bob didn't say, "Sorry. I want to start as an assistant bookkeeper." No indeed! Bob took the job and tackled with a good will the numberless odds and ends a general clerk is expected to look after. He kept his eyes open, and when he had a chance he asked questions. Bob was now on the inside, where business looked very different from what it had seemed to be from his school desk. His clerical work gave him contacts in both the bookkeeping and sales departments. To his surprise, he found working with figures deadly dull and sales work fascinating! So Bob took his plan and revamped it.

He went to the employment manager and said: "Mr. Brown, when I came to work here I asked to be put into the bookkeeping department as soon as there was a vacancy. I believe I'm better suited for sales work, now that I've seen something of it. What do I have to do to get ready to sell?"

What Bob did is a long story. In the sales department he used his stenography first. In the factory he learned how the firm's product was made by actually making it. All this came before his specific training in salesmanship. The important thing for our consideration is that from the *inside* Bob got a picture of business that not only altered his original plan but gave him an opportunity to make a more intelligent one, better suited to his interests and capabilities.

Someone has said; "It's not the first job that matters. It's the second." Your first job can well be anything that takes off the curse of inexperience, but your second job should be one that

represents thought and planning on your part. Otherwise, there may be a succession of meaningless jobs like those shown on Mary Smith's employment card—meal tickets, perhaps, but nothing more. Here's another story to illustrate our point.

#### **ALICE LEE, PRIVATE SECRETARY**

While Alice Lee was still in school she decided she wanted to become an expert legal stenographer. She made it her business to meet girls who were doing that type of work. From them she learned how they got into legal stenography, and she made her plans accordingly.

Alice discovered that a legal stenographer must take dictation very rapidly. So, before she left school, she made sure that her dictation speed *exceeded* the school's requirements. It took her a little longer than she had planned to stay in school. But she didn't care; she wanted to go out well armed.

Alice found she could not get a beginning position as a stenographer. Undiscouraged, she took one as a typist and continued studying at night to keep up her shorthand. Eventually, she was promoted to a stenographic position and was, of course, ready to step right into it, her shorthand as expert as if she had been using it right along. In this job, Alice was lucky because she was required to take dictation from several men. This immediately broadened and varied her experience, and now Alice was on her way. She kept her eyes open for an opportunity to work for a small law firm. This she succeeded in doing during one summer when extra help was needed during the vacation period. Her work was so good she was given a permanent job. Now, although she had worked only two years, she soon found herself taking difficult legal dictation.

A year or so more and Alice was ready for a heavier legal job. She found it in a large firm of prominent Wall Street lawyers. Because she was a girl who could take responsibility, it was soon heaped upon her.

In this company promotion from within was the rule. After six months Alice had an opportunity to try out for a position as

private secretary to one of the members of the firm. She won out over several other girls and is now earning a fine salary. She has exceeded her first plan. As she grew her plan grew. More than an expert legal stenographer, Alice has reached the coveted top position—secretary to the boss—in a highly specialized field.

Of course, not everyone is so fortunate as to realize his beginning plan. Sometimes he has to alter it considerably. But having some idea of his destination has kept him from going round in circles. The important thing is to keep your plan flexible. It is easier, then, to adjust it to conditions you could not anticipate.

### STEER CLEAR OF BLIND ALLEYS

One of the best features of having a plan is that it makes you alert to conditions about you. For instance, it will help you detect a blind-alley or pocket job. What you are looking for is a position with career possibilities, which is just the opposite. By a "blind-alley" or "pocket" job I mean a position that may look all right on the surface—a good place to start, in fact. But after you are in it, you discover it leads nowhere. No one is ever promoted into it, or it is not likely you would have got it from the outside. And no one is ever promoted out of it. If you find yourself in such a job, get out! It is as dangerous to your progress as is the bite of a deadly insect that would put you into a semicomatose state for months or years.

The advertising manager of a furniture store in a Western city was also in charge of a rental department. It was customary in that city for furniture stores to advertise houses for rent, giving intriguing descriptions but omitting addresses. This led home-seekers to call at the store to find out where the houses were located. It was the advertising manager's job to interview them tactfully, find out what they would need in the way of furniture, and introduce them to the store's salesmen.

The advertising manager soon found herself more interested in her interviews than in writing advertisements for phonographs

and gas ranges. But the fun of talking to house hunters couldn't lead anywhere—certainly not to a better advertising job, possibly in a national agency. It was definitely a pocket job.

So, however pleasant this young woman found her interviews, her ambition told her she could not afford the time they took, time in which she was learning nothing and making no progress in her chosen profession. Finally, she decided to ask to be released from the rental interviews and to use the free time to take on the advertising of an additional store. She had some difficulty in getting the manager of the furniture store to see things her way, but in the end he consented.

"Pickings" were pretty slim for a few weeks on half-time salary until Miss X landed another store account. But in the end her decision proved right, and she became, in the course of time, an account executive in an important national advertising agency. She side-stepped the pocket job and went on to success.

Just side-stepping a pocket job, however, is not enough. The ambitious beginner should try to find a job that will give opportunity for contact with one or more key executives, since these are the persons who have the capacity to recognize promise and the power to make promotions. Naturally, in an interview, one can't ask for such a position. But the informed girl will think twice before turning down a post as office messenger or mail girl, since in such work there are daily contacts with executives who are looking for good material for use in better spots in their departments.

Another great advantage of the "office-boy" type of job for girls, as well as for young men, is that it affords an opportunity to observe the work of the various departments. From such a vantage point the beginner gets a better idea of the kind of work he would like and can begin to take steps toward it.

Jane Wade took such a position as messenger in an advertising agency. She found running around the city on errands both physically tiring and boring. One day Jane told a woman executive that the job wasn't leading anywhere. "This would be no place to stay permanently," the older woman said, "But have



you looked around the office? Take on some odd jobs when waiting for your next outside assignment and you may find another type of work you can learn."

A tip was sufficient for Jane. She concentrated on the production department, for which she already ran errands. Soon she learned how to make out orders and to scale drawings for reproduction. Shortly afterward there was an opening as assistant in that department and Jane was the obvious choice, since she already knew something about the work.

### A LADDER WITH ONLY ONE RUNG

Did you ever think of what happens to receptionists? Evidently very few young women do, for there are hordes of applicants for every possible receptionist job.

Often girls who say they want to be receptionists have none of the requirements and are merely building up a picture of a job that does not exist except in their own dreams. Many of them imagine that all the receptionist has to do is sit at a desk, look pleasant, and greet people.

The real picture is quite different. Receptionists are frequently required to run a switchboard, a difficult job when one is constantly interrupted to answer inquiries and give directions. Sometimes, but not always, receptionists are required to do typing. The standard qualifications for this type of work are a pleasing personality, an attractive appearance, and the ability to meet the public with intelligence, courtesy, and tact. Because the personality requirement of this position is so high, firms often encounter difficulties in finding satisfactory receptionists. The girl who has what the job demands usually has a good job already, sometimes one with a future.

However, the honest personnel director cannot tell a girl there is anything ahead for a receptionist. Actually it is a dead-end job. The salary usually seems good to start. It is likely to be better than that of a stenographer. Sometimes, if the position includes switchboard work, it will eventually pay as much as some secretarial positions. But the tactful, beautifully dressed

and well-groomed young woman in the foyer of many an important corporation will never get beyond the desk she sits behind so decoratively. Her starting salary is almost, if not quite, her final salary. So, the ambitious girl who starts out as a receptionist, perhaps because it is the only job available, will always bear in mind that she must get out from behind that desk as soon as possible.

A plan helps you to use blind-alley jobs for what they are and no more—stopgaps that serve as meal tickets. Your plan will soon carry you out of such holes, for it will whet the appetite of your ambition and make you study to improve yourself.

### **CLIMBING WITH YOUR PLAN TO GUIDE YOU**

For instance, take the young man who expects from school days on to become a bookkeeper and then an accountant, perhaps even a Certified Public Accountant. Early in his business life he recognizes that to accomplish this he must take college courses in accounting at night unless he can take time out for day school. With a definite goal he can accomplish much by working hard at his studies while he is slowly stepping up in his daytime job. He will progress, perhaps from order clerk to assistant bookkeeper, from bookkeeper to junior accountant. Finally, he will become a comptroller, auditor, or accountant.

### **A CAREER PLAN HEARTENS YOU**

Another good thing about having a plan is that it buoys you up in times of discouragement. Even though your family and closest friends seem to think you are making no headway, if you feel you are acquiring information and experience that is taking you in your charted direction, you can laugh at them all. For you are not like the planless person—a Mr. Micawber waiting for something good to turn up. You know where you are headed, and you are making strides in that direction. But for that little plan stored away in your mind, you might be just like many of your fellow workers, satisfied merely to have a job. You don't have to count on luck, though you may have it. That brain

child of yours, that secret plan, is forcing you to study the jobs related to yours. It reminds you to watch for opportunities into which your training may fit. It reminds you of the importance of adjusting yourself to the personalities about you, in order that you will be ready to advance when the time comes. You are not just holding a job. You have embarked on a business career.

### "LIFE IS LIKE THAT"

And remember this. You may not be planning to stay in the business world the rest of your life—especially if you are a girl. But you may have to. So be smart. Begin your plan with the idea that business is your life career. You will go ahead faster than if you regard your work merely as a stopgap preceding marriage.

I know a woman who never expected to earn her own living. But her father died when she was twenty-four, leaving his affairs very much involved, and she was forced out into the business world. Time passed, and she didn't marry, so there was nothing to do but go on working. Fortunately, she had brains and made good. But she has often told me her business life would have been much easier if she could have started out as a young girl with the idea that she was to spend her life in business.

### IT'S A MAN'S WORLD

Because business careers have a wider scope for boys than for girls, a plan is even more important for a boy. There are several reasons why employers prefer men in top jobs. This is still a man's world and probably always will be. It is only since the invention of the typewriter and the telephone that women have come out of the kitchen and nursery into the business office. Men were tried out in the operation of both the typewriter and the telephone when these inventions first appeared, but they lacked the patience to handle them. Only then were young women called in. Their patience with detail gave them the jobs for keeps.

Then too, many employers still think it is a waste of time to

train a smart girl for important executive work, since she may leave if she marries.

#### **GIRLS PLAN FOR TODAY—BOYS PLAN FOR TOMORROW**

The difference between masculine and feminine planning shows up early. Boys plan for their lifework. But very often, if a girl is frank with herself, she premises her career plan with the condition, "If I don't marry, I'd like to . . ." This would be a sorry old world if girls didn't dream of marriage, homes, and babies ahead of careers. Because "hope springs eternal" until they are at least thirty, you see very few younger women in important executive positions. When you do meet them, almost without exception they are already married and expect to continue working.

While it is true that the lesser detail jobs in offices have gone almost exclusively to women, it is equally true that the top office positions, administrative and managerial are usually held by men. In most cases employers prefer not to use women in executive positions above those of office manager, personnel director, or head of the filing department; and the first two of these are often held by men.

While business was hard put to find men to fill all its best executive positions during the man-power shortage, it managed to struggle through with a minimum of women in top jobs. With this accomplished, the prospect is bright—for the male sex. The army has trained many thousands of young men in administrative work and given them experience, in this country and practically all over the world, in handling infinite clerical detail. This type of work may not have figured in the original career plan of these young men, but it will be the immediate answer to the need for employment of many a discharged soldier; and many will stay on, and advance.

Other young men, mainly naval and army officers, have had managerial experience such as they could never have obtained at so early an age in peacetime. Where such young men had planned on entering business, they will do well to provide them-

selves with the tools, typing and shorthand, so they will be in a position to work up from stenographic or secretarial work into minor executive positions. The road from there is straight up.

#### AFTER THIRTY WHAT?

Thirty may seem a very long way off to girls who are not even twenty. But now is the time to take full account of the painful fact that thirty is the dead line for many lines of work unless you are well entrenched in your job. And this is where a plan will help you get ready for that baneful birthday; for the girl who begins with a career plan and sticks to it, progressing as fast as opportunity offers, isn't nearly as likely to be looking for a job at thirty as is the young woman who has gone from one job to another without a plan.

The war, while it upset the plans of most young people, also made it easy for women over thirty to step into good office positions. The scarcity of trained office workers was so serious that the Government and the war industries begged retired office workers to return to work "for the duration." In case you know women who had this "break," don't let it delude you. The condition was a temporary one, which only another war emergency would duplicate, and we don't want that to happen.

Judging by the want ads. in city newspapers, hope sprang eternal in many a managerial breast even during the wartime shortage of typists and stenographers, for they kept right on saying, "young lady under thirty preferred," and taking what they could get. This preference for youthful typists and stenographers is not necessarily that "gentlemen prefer blondes." Older women are often too bossy, employers tell me. They prefer girls who will take orders.

Of course the ideal office worker is a girl who has had several years' experience—enough to teach her the routine of office work, give her good business manners and habits, and not enough to kill her early enthusiasm.

Naturally there are not enough girls who are thus qualified to fill the demand. Therefore the next choice is for younger girls,

who will work for less than the experienced employees. Although these may require some training, their very inexperience is often in their favor. Many firms prefer to teach their own methods to new employees. Jobs for beginners here!

### **PLANNING PROMISES GREATER HAPPINESS IN WORK**

Making a plan for your business life will benefit you in more ways than one. It will not only help you to succeed faster but it will help you to greater happiness in your work. And I can think of nothing more important than to be happy in the work you are doing. This is especially true for men or for young women who are not just filling in the time between school and marriage. When going to work each morning is equivalent to going to jail, there is something wrong, and one should take steps to be paroled.

Philip Lansing was a lad who had been brought up to work. During high-school days he had a paper route and in his senior year he supported himself entirely by working in the circulation department of a city newspaper from 5 to 11 P.M. daily. He enjoyed this work and it seemed natural to his family that he should follow high school with a course in a collegiate school of business administration. Apparently he liked business and he seemed to have the personality for selling. Yet after two years at college with business experiences at stated intervals as part of his studies, it became evident that Philip was not in the least suited for business. Philip himself believed he could make a living by developing creative merchandising ideas. His family was loath to accept his hunch. But Philip stuck to his point. He got a job he could eat on and studied store display work at night. In a few months he made some sketches for rather unusual window displays, which landed him a job with a Western department store. By this time his family was convinced of both his talent and his sincerity and came through with the money for an art education. Philip is now doing very well in the display department of a Fifth Avenue store in New York.

One very important point about this story is that Philip had

the courage to quit cold and prove he could make good *with his own plan*, whereas under the more conventional plan his parents made for him, he failed even before he had gone beyond the necessary training to carry it out.

### TRAINING AFTER HOURS

However, if you find yourself "in the wrong pew," the remedy is not necessarily to quit the job you have. Generally there are better ways to go about reorganizing your business life. Evening classes in business schools, art schools, or university extension classes solve this problem for many young people. They continue in their uncongenial jobs, fitting themselves during their free time for something they like better.

Recently, in lecturing on job getting to an evening class in a school of fashion design, I asked how many of the class were in other fields of activity at the time. I was surprised to see at least 50 per cent of the students raise their hands. Here is vision and courage of a high order. I was immensely proud for these young men and women who were planning their futures so intelligently, even though it involved changing occupations and, in many cases, fields of activity.

### THOSE GREENER PASTURES

Where the change means only getting another and a different kind of job in the field in which you were trained, the jolt is not necessarily great. The recommended procedure then is to tell your friends you are looking for something else and just what you prefer. During noon hours you can call and register at employment agencies. Ask the interviewers what chance you have of getting into the kind of work you think you want. You can get much valuable information from such questioning. The answers will clear up any doubt as to whether you have been indulging in dreams or whether your hopes are founded in fact.

One way of getting out of an uncongenial job into something else without chancing unemployment is to spend your vacation looking for another job. Naturally, employers don't think much

of this procedure. But sometimes it is the only way you can make a change without risking your livelihood. And the employer stands to gain by it if, when you have looked around, you come to appreciate the job you have.

In Pittsburgh, when I was lecturing there, a young man sought me out to tell me he was going to New York on a vacation, hoping to get a job selling books. I happened to know how scarce such jobs were just then and how poorly paid. I said to him, "Don't burn all your bridges behind you." I meant, of course, "Don't give up your present job, and be sure to hold out enough cash, in case." Later I heard he was glad enough to come home and go back to his old job.

Well, here we are talking about whether you ought to give up a job you don't like, when you haven't even got your first job yet! You think when you do get it you'll hang on to it, good and tight. I most sincerely hope you will. Only to those of you who have a plan and seriously think you are not advancing in it sufficiently, do I say, "Make a change." And even then, make haste slowly. Sometimes those above you have plans for you of which you know nothing, plans which will open up a future beyond your fondest hopes.

Often beginners are too impatient. They quit too soon. A man who heads one of the country's most important industries told me that twenty years ago he was ready to quit a job in which he had worked a year. He went to the president of the company and said, "I can't see any future here for myself." The president looked at him quizzically. "You haven't shown us yet that you're the man we are looking for to promote. But we're still hopeful. Maybe you can afford us a little longer if we can afford you. Why not wait a bit?"

### PLAN EARLY AND LATE

In making a plan, a certain amount of work on your part is involved. But it is the best investment of your time and effort I know. Don't take my word for it. Look about you. Size up the progress to date of your friends and relatives. Ask them



casually what they are heading for. You can learn a lot from their answers. Of course, there are exceptions. Occasionally, there's an accidental success that knocks all plan theories out the window. And sometimes an ambitious boy or girl gets hopelessly stuck in a situation in which there seems to be nothing to look forward to. However, exceptions are not the rule. My suggestion is that, since you have nothing to lose and everything to gain, you start formulating your plan right now.

Even young people who have already made some progress in their chosen field can benefit by a plan. The principles set forth in this chapter are just as applicable to the careers of those of you who have been working a few years. A checkup now on the progress you have made may show you how a plan can forward your ambitions more rapidly from now on. So, to *all* young business people I say, "Make a plan!"

#### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Name four construction projects, such as boatbuilding, in which a plan is necessary. Who makes such plans?

2. Look into your own mind and see how many different personal plans are now forming, or are already well defined. Is a plan for your business life any less important to you than these personal plans? Is it any less indispensable to you than the boatbuilder's plan is to him?

3. Should you delegate your career planning to anyone else?

4. Are parents' career plans for their children necessarily right? Necessarily wrong? Why is it usually best to work out your own plan?

5. Should you stick stubbornly throughout life to your first career plan?

6. How will having a plan help make you more employable? Will it help smooth the path for you, after you go to work?

7. Name some of the obstacles you may meet in pursuing your vocational objectives. Do you think you should change your plan when the obstacles are too great?

8. Discuss ways and means of getting career information, other than through your teachers. Is it advisable to put off opening your mental doors to such information until you are graduated and are ready to start looking for a job? If not, why not?

9. Discuss the difference between practical planning and wishful thinking. Is the latter the same thing as daydreaming?

10. A New England shoe manufacturer says that the personnel manager of his company is kept busy telling inexperienced applicants that there are no executive positions open for them. He gets rid of these young men very easily by stating what is true in his organization: "Anyone coming in here and expecting to become an executive must first learn to make shoes. In fact, he has to carry kegs of nails before he can even make shoes." Those without vision go elsewhere.

Do you think these young men are being guided by plans? If so, what is wrong?

11. Is the present time as good as any to work according to vocational blueprints? If so, why?

12. Explain what a "blind-alley" or "pocket" job is. How can you recognize one? Can you discuss a blind-alley job through your knowledge of the experience of any of your friends?

13. If the first position available to you upon leaving school looked to you like a pocket job, would you take it? If not, why not? If you would, discuss why you think taking this job would not necessarily keep you from realizing your career plan.

14. Assume that you have secured a beginning job. You now discover that it is not advancing you toward your goal. Of what value will your career plan be to you under these circumstances?

15. Discuss the reasons why a young man's career plan is likely to be more definite than a young woman's. Do you think women could advance as far as men in the business world if they were willing to put careers ahead of personal plans for marriage and homemaking? Granted that they could, would it be advisable?

16. What is meant by "try-out experience"? Have you had any? If so, did such experience help you to find out what you were best suited for? If you have not had such experience, do you think that working during summer vacation or after school would help make your career plan more practical? Do you think such work, even though not actually in an office, would help you to secure an office position?

17. If you already have a job, but have been training in night school for something else, discuss how you can make the break from one line of work into the other without risking unemployment.

18. Employment agencies in large cities urge that young people stay in their home cities, where they are known and where their chances of getting work consequently should be better.

Is this advice based on the fact that there are proportionately as many positions open in the smaller communities as there are in large cities?

19. Would it be profitable for employed young people who are without career plans to take stock of themselves and begin to chart their courses?

### ARE THESE STATEMENTS TRUE?

1. It does no good to plan. You have to take whatever job you can get.

2. If there is a family job available it is a good idea to take it, even if it is not the kind of job you can do best or would be happiest in.

3. A job is a job. This is no time to be "choosy." There's a lot of luck in it, and if you don't find what you like at first, you may be lucky later.

4. A "pocket" job is called that because you have it "in your pocket," as the saying goes, and no one can take it away from you.

5. Women who have worked in offices until they are thirty have nothing to worry about if they become unemployed. Their experience will get them other good jobs at high pay.

6. Even though you are not happy in the job you got into by chance, you'd better stay with it and not try to plan something else.

### PROJECTS

1. Based on your understanding of your own temperament, your education, and your interests, make a preliminary plan for your business life. Take into consideration those studies in which you excelled in school or college and what you have learned in business school about office occupations. Write out your plan, tracing the steps that may be necessary before you get in sight of your goal. Remember to keep your plan flexible so that you can adjust it to expediency, if necessary.

2. Look up the biography of a nationally successful businessman. Write a brief paper showing how he developed his career plan, the obstacles he met, and what changes he had to make in his plan, as he progressed through experience.

3. Prepare a short paper discussing the importance your natural bent

should play in planning for your business life. Do you think it important that one should be happy in his work?

4. Check your career plan, as outlined in Project 1, with one of your teachers and see whether it is realizable. Look up someone you know who is now employed in the kind of work to which you aspire, and check your career plan against his or her experience. Write a 1,000-word paper, reworking your plan in relation to the information you gathered from your teacher and your employed friend. In it explain just where your original plan was impractical, if it was, and why your revamped plan is more attainable.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **JOBS FOR BEGINNERS**

With your tentative career plan neatly tucked away in your mental filing cabinet, you are all set to take a look around at possible starting points. I think you will be greatly surprised to find there are so many. I was, when I had assembled the result of my investigation of just what jobs business is willing to turn over to well-trained, but inexperienced, young men and women.

#### **NO NEED FOR THE JITTERS**

Put out of your mind the discouraging things you've heard about how difficult it is for the beginner to get started. Although you may know young people who have been unable to secure employment to their liking, the majority of such persons have not been trained to do anything. Even during the war, high-school and college graduates who were untrained as well as inexperienced were seldom hired for office jobs, as they had nothing to offer but their willingness to work, which is not enough. The first question any employer asks is "What can you do?" When your business course is completed, you will have a satisfactory answer.

Another reason you may feel nervous in starting out is that your ideas of how to go about getting a job are vague. Cast aside that fear, too; for, long before you read through this book, I am certain you will know just how to present yourself to prospective employers. The ideas and suggested plans for job getting which are elaborated in future chapters have been tried and proved. If you will follow them you will be able to overcome most of the disadvantages of your beginning status. But let's leave job getting for the moment, and concentrate on what

kind of job you are going after. It is most important that you make this decision. And before you decide, you will need to know more about the kinds of jobs beginners can and do fill satisfactorily.

Let me assure you that business feels kindly toward you as a graduate with commercial training. It assumes you have something to offer, and it is willing to try you out in any possible opening where experience is not absolutely essential. Reasonably enough, however, business would like beginners to be able to state what they can do. Too many young people apply for "anything," leaving it to the busy executive to sort out their training and skills and decide where they belong.

### PREVIEW OF BEGINNING JOBS

In this and in the following chapter, I shall give you a brief picture of some of the beginning jobs which, with your training, you should be able to fill. Of course, not all of you will be attracted to all the jobs I shall describe. Nor will all of you be best fitted for all of them. The thing to do is to look at each of them impersonally and appraise your vocational assets in relation to each. Then you can decide which are not for you and which are the sort you should get busy and go after.

A great deal has been said about the advantages of aiming high. But now we are going to discuss the lowly job and its advantages as a starting point. Bear in mind that it is a mistake to try for any job in which you cannot do your best work. For only by demonstrating what you can do in a job that you are qualified to fill can you prove your ability to do more important work. For instance, it is little short of a calamity for a student who is well prepared for a typing job but not adequately prepared for a stenographic one to secure a position as a stenographer instead of as a typist. As a typist she could demonstrate her ability to do stenographic work as soon as she had a little more training. But as a stenographer she is likely to do poor grade work and lose her opportunity for permanency in the job she desires.

It goes without saying that in a brief preview such as this I shall not be able to give complete job analyses. All I shall do is to paint a partial picture of a number of positions as they exist in many businesses. The terminology I shall use may not always agree with that you have used in school. For instance, some books call all office positions, including bookkeeping, stenographic, and secretarial, *clerical* positions. In the census they are all listed under "clerical occupations." But I shall use the word clerical in a narrower sense as applying to a great many positions that call for general business ability and training, though not necessarily including a knowledge of bookkeeping and shorthand. I mention this point here, because I shall begin our discussion of possible business positions with clerical jobs. These are the jobs held by about 70 per cent of the office workers throughout the country, a fact that indicates their importance to you at this stage of your planning.

One reason for disappointment among business graduates is that they think because they have had secretarial training they must start as secretaries. Then when they find it almost impossible to begin at that level, they are thrown into confusion. Secretarial training is an excellent foundation for your business future. But before you actually can do secretarial work in any organization you must know the policies and the problems of that firm and be at home in the routine of business generally. To acquire this knowledge, an internship is needed. But more of this later.

Actually, your school training will fit you for three possible approaches to business, provided you have studied bookkeeping. It is a mistake for you to overlook two important entrances by assuming that stenography is the only way in. Here they are—shorthand, bookkeeping, and clerical. In starting, why limit yourself to any one approach? Even if your career plan puts stenography as your ultimate objective, don't worry if you can't go through that rather crowded gateway to your first job. Let's take a look through another gateway and see what keeps the workers on the other side of it eating regularly.

### TAKE A LOOK AT CLERICAL JOBS

In the 1940 census "clerical and kindred workers" comprised the largest group of office workers, totaling 4,612,356. Slightly more than half of these were women. The classification included all general, departmental, and special clerks; information clerks, file clerks, mail clerks, billing clerks, cost clerks, invoice clerks, order clerks, shipping clerks, inventory clerks, adjustment clerks, time clerks, pay-roll clerks, voucher clerks, posting clerks, stock clerks, etc.

Contrasting the above figure for clerks with a total of 1,056,868 stenographers, typists, and secretaries, and 856,448 bookkeepers, accountants, and cashiers is illuminating. Over four times as many clerical workers as secretaries, stenographers, and typists; over five times as many as in the bookkeeping classification.

Do you wonder that young people can well afford to consider clerical work seriously as a place to start—as a door to careers? That many who begin in clerical work will remain there, goes without saying. They find the work congenial, they see opportunities for advancement, and they would not switch to typing, say, or bookkeeping, no matter what the inducement. In many of the clerkships listed above typing is helpful, if not required. In others, as posting, a knowledge of bookkeeping is desirable, but not necessary.

**The General Clerk.** As previously discussed, what you are looking for is an opportunity to get inside a business organization and put to use some of the things you learned in school. What better place than in a position as general clerk or in one of the specialized clerical positions just enumerated? The term "general clerk" can mean anything from the most elementary job with the smallest pay check to a real position in which you will need some knowledge of bookkeeping and the ability to use a calculating machine. Many small firms employ one or two general clerks to handle all such tasks as answering the telephone, handling the mail, meeting callers and ascertaining their wants, checking orders, making out bills, and doing routine typing, in addition to filing correspondence, orders, and records.



You can see at a glance that to do all these sundry tasks well is no mean achievement and that a variety of abilities and quite a few skills are absolutely essential. Shorthand is not necessary, unless you wish to advance from general office work to stenography. Knowing how to run the simpler office machines will help, although often you can learn them on the job. Typing, some bookkeeping, and a general knowledge of indexing and filing are needed. A good personality is an asset, as always, while a cheerful disposition and the ability to get along with others are prime qualifications.

Although a general clerk is one of the busiest of persons in any organization, his varied activities may or may not lead to advancement. Much depends upon whether the business is one in which this type of work is merely routine or very important. A publisher once said to me: "There's a real opportunity for intelligent young people in clerical work in our kind of business where the very heart of the organization is the order department. The competition isn't nearly so keen in the clerical end as in the stenographic field. Ambitious young men and women can advance easily in clerical jobs because often those around them aren't up to them in mental equipment. It's the same idea as that of college men who entered our army during World War I, through the draft. They stood well above the general average. In direct contrast, those who entered officers' training camps found their competition to be from other college men of equal intelligence and education. Naturally, their qualifications counted less in the more competitive field."

If you take a general clerk's job as a starter, you must watch out that you don't get stranded there. Keep your eyes open, and say to yourself constantly: "Where do I go from here? What should my next job be?" By keeping mentally alert, you can observe the other positions, the people who hold them, and the evident requirements. You can pick up information about different occupations in business and start to train after hours for the one that most attracts you. You may decide you would like to go into the sales, the purchasing, or the advertising depart-

ment. Or you may wish to study advanced bookkeeping and then accounting, in order to work up into the financial end of the business. It is not too much to say that from your humble clerical start all roads may lead to Rome.

**The Mail Clerk.** It is not practical to discuss here each of the various special clerical positions. But enough has been said to start your imagination working along clerical lines. However, before we leave the topic altogether, I want to elaborate a bit upon the mail clerk. Often this is another term for office girl or messenger. This is as good a spot as any in which to develop, or to prove that one has a sense of responsibility. The mail is a very important part of most businesses and one of the most interesting parts. Being responsible for it, in even a small way, is the beginning of a valuable experience. After a few months spent in sorting and delivering incoming mail and preparing and dispatching outgoing mail, the next step up is often to order clerk. Then begins the "paper work," which is a pleasure to the methodical and a deadly bore to the imaginative. But these are good preliminary steps to learning any business. Also, in some organizations they provide an acquaintance with department heads, which may lead to opportunities for advancement.

One pitfall of clerical jobs is that the occupants are so often "unheralded and unsung." They can work along for years without ever meeting the heads of the business, if it is an extensive one. They may also, unless they are ambitious, lose out through becoming marooned in the shallows of detail. On the other hand, there are countless cases of bright boys who have begun as mail clerks and have advanced to the very top of the ladder. Railroad, steamship, and oil companies, banks and financial institutions, as well as countless manufacturing concerns, are today headed by executives who started as office boys or mail clerks.

#### **SOME START AS PAGE OR MESSENGER**

Here is a beginning job that has been overlooked or minimized, because it has not been very well understood. Often the position

of page is a vestibule job that gives an overview of the whole business organization. Let me give you a few examples. In a Loop bank in Chicago, business-school graduates, many of them college graduates as well, start as messengers. These young women act as "carriers and fetchers" before they can be typists. This bank considers its plan the ideal way for employees to begin. It wants high-caliber material, because many of the messengers will become stenographers and secretaries. The starting salary for messengers is \$20 a week, which is as good as, or better than, most starting stenographic salaries.

Another similar case I know of is in New York, where a friend of mine heads the transcription department in the offices of a national manufacturing company. My friend tells me she starts all inexperienced office employees as messengers. This service eases the novices into business routine and at the same time affords an opportunity for the supervisor to observe their deportment and courtesy and to see how they conduct themselves with other young women and with men on the job. In this particular concern, a messenger is allowed eight minutes in which to make a collection of cylinders and papers from the various executive desks. She is instructed not to speak unless spoken to on her rounds and then only when asked to take a message to the supervisor. The messenger may not be aware that she is being timed, but if her collecting frequently takes longer than the allotted eight minutes, she is likely to be under suspicion of habitual loitering.

After six months as a messenger in this office, a young woman will have acquired the feel of the office and the work. She will have learned the names of all the executives (and, let us hope, how to spell them correctly), the nature of their particular divisions of work, and the general trends of business affairs in the whole concern. Knowing the system from observation, she is now ready to start as a junior typist. After six months to a year of typing, she may be put at tabulating on a large carriage machine. Then she will be introduced gradually to voice-machine work by being given used cylinders with which to practice transcribing.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company has a similar program of gradual advancement for its messenger girls, whom it calls pages. So, as a beginner, do not overlook these frequently available jobs. When no other openings are forthcoming, it is something to know that you can step into positions where there are such definitely planned steps ahead. Personally, I think it an excellent idea to add valuable general experience to your business education by starting as a messenger, when you can work for a high-grade firm that has an established promotional policy.

### TYPING YOUR WAY UPWARD

**The Typist-clerk.** Of various kinds of beginning jobs, one of the most numerous is the position of typist-clerk. For the beginner with other skills at his or her command it offers opportunity for advancement. Primarily, this job requires a knowledge of typing and the ability to perform many of the duties described for the general clerk earlier in this chapter. The distinction between the two jobs is that the typist-clerk is employed as a typist, and other clerical duties are added to that job; whereas the general clerk needs a knowledge of typing, though he may use it very little.

**The Part-time Typist.** Just as the business graduate who looks forward to the important job of machine transcribing may need to start as a messenger, so if you aspire to stenography you may be glad to take a typing position for a start. And as a typist, part-time work may be your entering wedge.

In work by the day, wages are less if you only type than if you can take dictation in addition, but this discrepancy is not so apparent in weekly salaries.

When an employer sends to an employment office for a typist or for several of them, it is usually because of an unexpected volume of rush work. This may mean only a few days', or at most a few weeks', work. But part-time typing can be a more important beginning than appears on the surface. If an employment agency will send a beginning typist on a temporary job—

and many of them will not—you are in luck. A few days of typing in each of several offices is a wonderful seasoner. And if you are especially good, who knows but what you may be tried out for dictation or may even be added to the permanent staff when a vacancy occurs!

Take the case of Millicent Taylor who is now secretary to the space buyer of an advertising agency. Employed first for a few days' rush typing, Millicent was so efficient that the advertising agency called her week after week, whenever there was extra work. Finally, during the illness of one of the regular stenographers, Millicent took on her work for a whole week. The executives appreciated the way in which Millicent adapted herself to their methods of work. When an increase in business required the addition of another stenographer, the personnel director found it simpler to take Millicent on than to train a new girl who might not fit into the organization so well. Of course, it took several years more for her to land the important position of secretary to an executive in the firm, but it was the humble temporary typing position that started her on her way.

**The Full-time Typist.** You may wonder whether it is possible to secure a position as typist without also knowing shorthand. Such positions are to be found, but it is true that there is a greater demand for young men and women who know both type-writing and shorthand. When an employer telephones an employment agency to send him a typist, he is likely to say: "Send one who knows shorthand. It is better to be on the safe side, in case I might need to give dictation." In other words, if he can get both skills in the same employce for the same salary, so much the better.

**From Typist to Voice-machine Operator.** Some of the large insurance companies and other firms that use voice machines employ beginning typists and gradually train them to become operators of dictating machines. Jobs in such firms throughout the country afford an excellent starting point for beginners. This way of stepping up from typing is explained by the office manager of a firm of magazine publishers. "We start a girl as

a typist," says this executive, "and in that way she becomes acquainted with us and we with her. She learns all our various type forms; and, in a company that gets out a number of magazines, there are plenty of them with which to become acquainted. If she shows an aptitude and willingness to be trained on the voice machine, she is allowed to play around with a cylinder. Although she may not be aware of it, the cylinder has already been transcribed, so her transcription can be checked against that of an experienced operator. Before many trials she has the proud satisfaction of seeing her first letter go up to the dictator for his signature."

How long you work as a typist before you will be allowed to take dictation or be started on machine transcribing depends on you and on the firm for which you work. The supervisor of correspondence in a New York insurance office says: "We start a young woman as typist, and her advancement depends upon her own ability. I have taken beginners who knew nothing at all about business except in theory, and inside of three months they have been started on the voice machines because they were so capable I could not hold them back. Then again, I have started others, who, lacking initiative and interest, never got beyond typing jobs."

**From Typist to Stenographer.** Much the same thing is true in small banks and business firms where they do not use voice machines but employ typists to get out form letters and do other routine beginning work. In such firms, after a few months of typing, a young woman who has shown interest in her work and a grasp of what she is doing will be tried out in taking dictation of a few letters. If her first letters are acceptable she will gradually be given more dictation. Then, depending upon the volume of work, her helpfulness, and her luck, before long she will be spending most of her time on stenography and someone else will have been brought in to help with the typing.

Don't make the mistake of refusing a typing position because you think you will lose shorthand speed through lack of practice. The head of a metropolitan business school declares, "This idea

that you'll lose your shorthand if you don't use it is all nonsense. It is like swimming, dancing, or riding a bicycle. Once learned, although you may get a bit rusty, it is really yours forever. You may never take a letter in your first job, but if you have mastered shorthand it will come back to you when you need it, with a little practice."

He tells of one of their graduates who married right after leaving school, without ever having used her shorthand. When her husband died twenty years later, she came back to the school expecting that it would take a year to learn shorthand all over again. Actually, it took her just three months to get up an excellent speed.

If you fear your shorthand will leave you, you can keep ready for dictation by having someone in your family give you some practice letters each evening, or you can go to night school twice a week. Another way to get good speed practice is to take down radio talks and announcements. Any of these supplementary methods is preferable to refusing a position as typist, and certainly better than prolonged unemployment which would also necessitate extra efforts to keep up both shorthand and typing speed.

### CAREER POSSIBILITIES IN FILING

**The File Clerk.** Although it is true that in many offices the filing is done by general clerks, stenographers, typists, or even office boys, more and more firms are hiring full-time expert file clerks to handle this essential and often complicated work. An encouraging number of beginners are taken on as file clerks, because they have had business-school training in the fundamental principles and systems of filing. For students who expect to make filing a career, one city-operated graduate business school offers a fifty-hour general course in filing. The class work consists of development of office filing, rules for indexing and filing, operating the files, alphabetic filing, numeric filing, geographic filing, subject filing, filing supplies, filing equipment, follow-up methods, Kardex job analysis records, Kardex prospect

methods, triple check filing, Soundex filing, cross-referencing, Variadex filing system, and decimal filing.

**Qualifications for Filing.** Educated young women will do well to consider the vocational possibilities of filing, for filing is no longer regarded as a job that "anybody can do." The equipment houses have done much to professionalize the work by teaching that filing requires brains. Filing demands other qualities, too, such as imagination, resourcefulness, patience, accuracy, and a strict sense of orderliness and responsibility. Typewriting skill is also essential.

Moreover, if she regards the initial position of file clerk as an opportunity to progress toward responsible executive work as a file supervisor, a beginner with qualifications for filing will make the most of that experience. To consider a position in the filing department as merely a place in which to wait until something better in the office opens up is to miss the point entirely and possibly pass up a future position that would pay as well as secretarial work and sometimes even better.

**Higher Filing Jobs.** Young women who have these qualifications and who are not easily bored by the recurring round of small tasks necessary to filing may look forward to progressing from file clerk to assistant supervisor, then to file supervisor or executive in charge of both the files and the file clerks. Beyond this there are some really outstanding occupations, such as that of systematizer or analyst. This specialist services or analyzes filing departments, reorganizes them, or installs new systems of filing.

Then, too, the obscure but ambitious filing clerk may one day become a teacher of filing in a commercial high school, a private business school, or a university. The field is almost exclusively feminine, since filing is a housekeeping job filled with details that require unlimited patience and perseverance. Men are glad to turn over such responsibilities to women. An occupation in which the top positions are held by women always presents a brighter future for progressive-minded girls than where the reverse is true.



Sometimes the position of file clerk is a "singleton"; that is to say, one person is in charge of specialized or technical files, such as legal or subject files, or a combination of business library and the files. On the other hand, the beginner may be one of several file clerks working under a highly trained file supervisor.

**Specialized Filing.** Law offices are especially dependent upon their files and afford excellent opportunity for file clerks who have intelligence as well as good educational background. In one large law office recent college graduates are given preference as file clerks provided they have graduated *cum laude*. The reason is that in these positions high intelligence is considered more important even than training or experience. This office employs five persons in the filing department to service fifty practicing attorneys. When employing a new file clerk, the office manager takes great care to choose a young woman with an excellent memory, keen powers of observation, and a love of detail. Personality and a good appearance are also considered important, because the file clerks are in constant direct contact with the lawyers.

The head of the filing department in this particular firm believes it takes a person with a high I. Q. to remember the general contents of the papers already in the files and to familiarize herself anew each week with from 4,000 to 5,000 new papers that come into the department to be filed. It is true that the file supervisor classifies and marks for the proper files all incoming material. But she expects the clerk who files them to learn the contents of each paper. All this is necessary to save the time of high-priced attorneys.

To illustrate, it often happens that several lawyers are working on the same case. One attorney will call for certain papers, but they are not to be found in the files. The file clerk working on the assignment must know which of the other lawyers has those particular papers at the time and must be able to report back promptly as to just when he will be through with them. Again, a lawyer will call for a paper by name, saying, "Get me the agreement made between the Gray Company and the First

National Bank on April 24, 1937." The file clerk must know which of the parties mentioned is a client of the firm, and just where that agreement is to be found in the files. Filing a dull job? Not in that office or in hundreds like it, where the files are the heart of the business.

Filing has become so important as a specialized occupation that women engaged in it have organized filing associations in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. The New York and the Chicago associations publish their own magazines, called respectively the *File* and the *Bulletin*.

### PLUG IN! PLUG OUT! AND UP!

Upon graduating from business school you may find it easier to get a job running a switchboard than to locate a stenographic position. If you have the right idea about the occupation of PBX (private branch exchange) operator, you will realize that this start is not so lowly as it might seem. For much besides gossip can be learned on any business switchboard! A good voice, tact, discretion, and common sense are major requirements, and a girl who exercises these qualities on a private switchboard job, filling in her spare time with typing, will often be advanced to other work in the organization.

**The PBX Operator.** Some employees, however, like the swift changes and the human element of the switchboard work so well that they prefer to remain there. By attending to their work they often manage to make real jobs for themselves operating switchboards in hotels, apartment houses, banks, department stores, public utilities, newspaper offices, insurance firms, or law offices. There are about 130,000 such attendants throughout the United States, at salaries ranging from \$22 to \$60 or even \$65 a week. In the large cities the average is around \$35, or about the same as for a stenographer. The boards handled by these girls vary in size from the small cordless type, usually operated by someone who has other duties such as typing or acting as receptionist, to boards of twenty, thirty, or even forty or more positions, in the larger firms.

In order to provide well-trained, capable attendants for their customers who have private branch exchanges, the telephone company maintains training departments and placement bureaus in cities of 100,000 population or over. Even in small towns and villages where there are only a few private boards, the telephone company will train an appointee even at the expense of securing an instructor from a near-by city. There is no charge to the business firm or to the attendant for this training and placement service. Young women who are interested in securing such positions may leave their names with the placement bureau of the telephone company in any city or town, knowing they will be summoned and trained when a suitable position is available. Experience has taught the telephone company that it is not practical to train attendants very far in advance of their starting to work, and that since each business requires a different service, it is better to train the employee for the particular switchboard she is going to operate.

Executives are coming to appreciate more and more what an important part the PBX attendant plays in the successful conduct of their business. They know that the voice that says, "Good morning, Blank and Company," over the telephone stands for the firm itself in the mind of the customer at the other end of the wire. Courtesy, interest, and intelligence can handle incoming calls to the firm's profit; but flippant, rude, or ignorant replies tend to alienate customers forever. As for the switchboard operator whose soothing voice "turneth away wrath" on the part of a client on an incoming call, she is worth more to her firm than could ever be estimated in mere dollars and cents.

At that, she can be too friendly, even downright chummy. "Okay," "Bye-bye," and "All righty," although spoken very pleasantly, will hardly impress the man on the other end of the wire with the dignity and trustworthiness the business firm wishes to convey to its clients. Telephone personality, the ability to create a good impression over the wire, requires not only specific character traits but an education in the proper and courteous use of the English language. The person who has

these qualifications is extremely valuable to her employer, and in certain instances he pays her up to \$60 a week in recognition of the fact.

Although PBX attendants are employed in widely diversified fields of work, they are closely associated with the telephone operating forces and hold the same ideals of service and loyalty as do telephone company operators. Since 1920 the American Telephone and Telegraph Company has had an annual system of awards in memory of its former president, Theodore N. Vail. The awards are made "for noteworthy public service," which often includes heroism and saving of lives. They have been won many times by PBX operators whose quick and sometimes self-sacrificing attention to duty has been outstanding.

**The Telephone Receptionist.** In some organizations that do not need a full-time receptionist, the PBX operator acts in the capacity of telephone-receptionist. If you think this is a desirable beginning job for you, consider first whether or not your stock of patience is practically limitless and whether your nerves are well under control. For besides needing the skill to handle a switchboard, as just described, you will need a sympathetic understanding of human nature. The telephone-receptionist's job is no place for anyone who has been spoiled at home, for a young woman with a quick, sharp temper, or for one with a chip on her shoulder. But if you will enjoy meeting and dealing with the strange vagaries of many differing personalities all day long, you may find this steppingstone job a fascinating entrance to the business world.

The receptionist's desk is usually at a counter or inside window, so that callers can get to her easily. She must be able to answer their questions, arrange for them to see officers of the firm on whom they are calling, or dismiss them tactfully if the occasion requires. In this double job, the firm's switchboard business cannot be neglected for a moment. Yet many telephone-receptionists find or make time for long conversations with their personal friends about their own private affairs while business stands still. How many business callers have stood in line in

outer offices, waiting while the telephone-receptionists argued with "mama" at home, or "the boy friend" over at his own office!

A man who had an appointment at four o'clock with the president of an important business concern was kept waiting until his appointment was ten minutes overdue, while the receptionist chatted with her girl friend about last night's date. The caller happened to be the efficiency expert who was being engaged to come in and put the business on a paying basis. Naturally he had no desire to appear late for his appointment with the president. After he was taken on, it can well be imagined that one of the first spots he checked for inefficiency was that switchboard. Perhaps the friendly, gossipy, well-meaning receptionist is still wondering why she lost that job!

When the combination position of receptionist and telephone operator is in a doctor's or dentist's office, the employee must also be a good typist in order to fill out card records and send out bills. As with the recently developed position of medical secretary, it is becoming increasingly important that the girl in this position know shorthand so that she can take case histories when necessary and also a few letters. In many professional offices, shorthand is now considered more important at the doctor's reception desk than a knowledge of nursing.

#### RECEPTIONIST—OFFICE HOSTESS

The position of receptionist, divorced from the switchboard, appears to be more glamorous but is in reality no less exacting. The young woman who holds this position in the editorial department of a newspaper, in an advertising agency, in a law office or other place of business where there are many callers needs to have a sense of humor plus boundless tact to carry her through. Personal appearance and intelligence count about equally in this position. The receptionist must be smartly dressed, though simply, and her clothes as well as her manner must suggest a certain exclusiveness and authority.

Since this is a job that calls for meeting the public at close range, it is no place for the shy and retiring. To succeed here,

the receptionist must like all kinds of people, meet them on a friendly but impersonal basis, and be able to handle them with discretion and courtesy. She must be ready also to detect tricks and subterfuges used in efforts to get past her to the inner offices. She is guarding the persons and the time of a number of busy and important people, and if she wastes their time by admitting unwelcome callers she may be replaced by someone more discerning.

However, although she is the dragon standing guard, she must take care not to display an offending suspicion of every caller, or she may turn away business for her firm. Sometimes, the caller who is reluctant to state his errand is an out-of-town visitor with an important contract to place, whom the firm's executives would surely like to meet. Another such caller, hiding his purpose beneath reluctance, may be a salesman who knows that he is intruding but conceals his real errand under the insistence that his business is "personal," because to reveal it would mean polite dismissal by the receptionist. The competent person in this job develops a technique which after a time unerringly separates the desirable callers from the superfluous. A keen memory is a prime asset in this constant sorting process. Without it a receptionist cannot hope to succeed, even though she has all the other qualifications.

This is true in doctor's offices, too. An ability to remember names and faces and to recall them quickly and tactfully is even more important for a medical receptionist than for a receptionist in a strictly business office. Recently, this was demonstrated to me when I asked a friend to meet me in my doctor's waiting room. When she arrived she said: "I was to meet Mrs. MacGibbon here. Is she inside?" "MacGibbon?" said the receptionist, "I don't know anybody by that name." Then turning to the five or six other patients who were waiting she said helplessly, "I just can't remember all these names."

As was said in the preceding chapter—with all of its strict requirements, there is not much future to the position of receptionist. The young woman who makes a great success of the

work can be certain of an increase in salary up to a certain point, say \$25 to \$30 a week, and there she must be content to stop or change to some more lucrative type of work. Yet there have been instances where the reception room has been the vestibule to a better job in the same firm. Employers have been known to suggest that able receptionists study shorthand at night in order to take stenographic positions with promotional possibilities. But all employers are not so unselfish, so watch out for that "Blind Alley" sign!

So much for a few of the entering-wedge jobs for beginners. In none of them will you set the world afire, but in any one of them you will have a preview of business. You will see how the stars play their parts, and you can decide which of them you would like to understudy, looking toward that day when you will occupy a swivel chair of your own.

And now let us extend our observations to another group of beginning jobs.

### QUESTIONS

1. Is it true that no one wishes to employ beginners?
2. What can you do to bolster up your courage before looking for work?
3. What are the three gateways by which a beginner may expect to enter business?
4. Which gateway looks most attractive to you? Why?
5. Name some beginning jobs under each. State your first, second, and third choice.
6. Does secretarial training fit one only for actual secretarial work?
7. What type of information does the secretary need to have about business which she cannot be expected to acquire in school?
8. What percentage of office workers are engaged in clerical work?
9. Following the definition of "clerical" given in the text, name other clerical jobs not included in the list given in this chapter.
10. What are some of the advantages of starting as a general clerk?
11. Could one be a successful general clerk without some knowledge of
  - a. Arithmetic?
  - b. Bookkeeping?
  - c. Typing?

d. Shorthand?

e. Filing?

Rearrange the list of skills in the order of their importance to a general clerk.

12. If you were offered, the week after graduation, a position as office boy or messenger, would you take it? If so, give your reasons. If not, give your reasons.

13. Suppose you had spent six weeks looking for work, without success. Would you then accept the above job? Why?

14. Do you consider a part-time typing job better than no job?

15. What could you gain from such work, apart from the day's pay?

16. When can filing be considered a beginning job with future possibilities? In what types of business would filing be especially interesting to you? Boring?

17. Can you name other types of business besides law where the files are very important?

18. Name some of the personal qualifications of a good file clerk.

19. What qualities are needed for becoming a successful PBX operator?

20. What are some of the expressions a PBX operator would not be permitted to use if she were running the switchboard in an average business office? Amplify the text, out of your own experience.

21. State the advantages of a position as receptionist. The disadvantages.

22. How does the position differ when the receptionist also answers the telephone?

23. Does a telephone-receptionist need to know typing? Shorthand?

24. What is the difference between a PBX operator and a telephone-receptionist? Is the position of voice-machine operator the same as that of PBX operator?

25. Can a girl who is a poor typist do well as a voice-machine operator?

26. If you can't find a beginning job as a secretary, should you turn down everything else and keep on looking for secretarial work?

#### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If you took a beginning job as office girl or messenger, how would you plan to work up from there?

2. Although you wish to start as a stenographer, would you accept a position as typist if that were all you could get upon graduation? State your reasons.



3. What sort of inquiry would you make regarding the firm and the actual job before deciding to take any of the above positions? Why would this be important?

4. The telephone company endeavors to inspire its own employees and the PBX operators whom it trains for private switchboards with a high sense of devotion to duty and responsibility. They point proudly to girls who have valiantly gone down with the ship, as pluckily as any ship's captain ever did.

Several years ago when an explosion occurred at the Cleveland Clinic, causing a major disaster, Gladys Gibson could have escaped through a window at the side of her switchboard. But she stuck to her post in order that she might save other lives. She was found dead at her switchboard. In a fire at the Hotel Plaza in Jersey City, Helen Sullivan, PBX operator for the hotel, stayed at her switchboard calling for help and warning guests until finally her dress caught fire. Helen died as a result of burns, a few weeks later. Both these girls were awarded the Vail medal for bravery, posthumously.

Of course, there are many other true stories such as these where PBX operators warned guests of fire and flood and lived to enjoy their honors and awards. But they took the same risks as Gladys Gibson and Helen Sullivan. Do you feel that any job has the right to ask such a high type of service? Do you feel that employees are justified in giving their lives on the line of duty?

5. Do you think that filing can be stimulating mental work, or that it seldom goes beyond the putting away of papers in drawers?

6. You have been told that the first question an employer will ask you is, "What can you do?" In the light of the beginning positions described in this chapter, discuss how you would answer this question.

7. Choose one of the clerical jobs listed in this chapter and explain from the title what the job probably entails.

8. The terms "apprenticeship" and "vestibule job" are being used more and more regarding office positions. What do they mean?

### PROJECTS

1. Select one of the positions, other than that of typist, outlined in this chapter and write a paper of not more than 500 words about it. Do outside reading on this position and, if possible, talk with one or two persons who now hold such jobs, or who have held them.

Based on your research, be prepared to answer class questions about the duties of this position, the salary paid for such work in your city,

the personal qualifications necessary for success in it, and the promotional possibilities ahead for those who make good.

2. You are the telephone-receptionist in an industrial firm where there are ten top executives and many minor ones. One morning when you are very busy a man calls in person and demands to see Mr. Hayes, the manager of the company. Your duty is to keep out the unwanted and yet to offend no one.

The conversation at your desk goes something like this:

YOU: Mr. Hayes is busy. Who shall I say is calling?

VISITOR: My name doesn't matter. But my business does. It is important.

YOU: What company do you represent? I shall have to tell Mr. Hayes.

VISITOR: (*Becoming angry*) That doesn't matter, young lady. Take my word for it, Mr. Hayes will be glad to see me. How long will I have to wait?

YOU: I'm sorry, but Mr. Hayes does not see anyone unless he knows who they are and what they wish to see him about.

VISITOR: (*Losing control of temper*) Just tell him my business is personal, then. And for your benefit, when I do see Mr. Hayes I shall suggest that he have a more polite person out here unless he wants to lose business.

You have no way of telling whether this caller is a prospect who wishes to place an order with the company, a gate crasher who wishes to sell Mr. Hayes something, or a man looking for a job. You will be reprimanded if you let business get away from the firm and also if you let someone in who will waste Mr. Hayes's time. What would you do?

Think out the different possible steps you could take and then write out what you would say further to the visitor. If you decide to telephone Mr. Hayes about the matter in the caller's presence, what would you say?

3. Find out and be prepared to discuss in class whether the present trend is toward one central filing department that handles all the files in a business organization or toward separate files for each department.

Which system, centralized or decentralized filing, will result in a greater demand for trained file clerks? For file supervisors?

4. Prepare a 500-word paper discussing the career possibilities growing out of a beginning position as typist.

## CHAPTER III

### OTHER BEGINNING JOBS

The positions we shall now discuss often go to the experienced. But there is no law against beginners aspiring to these jobs and actually securing them; in fact, it is being done every day. The magic formula calls for perfection in skills, mental alertness, and a good personality.

#### THROUGH THE STENOGRAPHIC GATEWAY

You think you'd like to start as a stenographer. After you have spent months in concentrating on learning shorthand, you are quite right in wanting to start there. Well, often you can begin as a stenographer, but seldom if ever as a secretary. The two jobs are not the same at all. The word "secretary" is used much too loosely. The stenographer has very definite and limited duties, few of them executive, whereas the secretary's work includes everything that could possibly concern the individual from whom she takes dictation. The secretary actually represents the man for whom she works. She plans his day and makes his appointments for him; she coaches him, reminds him, often handles his personal bank account, and is, in fact, his "other self," even during his absences from the office. It takes time and experience to grow into a real secretarial position. You need to know a lot about business in general, and *the* business in particular. As a stenographer, on the other hand, you would be occupied chiefly with taking dictation and transcribing it on the typewriter. In some concerns other duties would be added, of course, but in no sense would you have the semiexecutive responsibility that is shouldered by a private secretary. And as a beginner you are better off not to jump in, knee deep, right from the start.

**Stenographic Classifications.** There are several different types of stenographic positions, so let us discuss them for a moment. And while we are going over the ground, we shall consider the changes that are taking place in office organizations, changes that peculiarly affect the stenographer and her work. This will help you to know your way about in advance and to pick the kind of stenographic job that will be best for you.

First of all, let us look at the various classifications under which stenographers may be grouped:

1. The stenographer who takes dictation from one or several specified executives, yet who works independently of other stenographers or office staff. She may be self-directed or under the supervision of a department head or of the boss himself. This procedure is followed in an office designated as a *decentralized* office.

2. The stenographer who takes dictation indiscriminately from a number of persons in many departments and whose work for these executives is directed by a central supervisor. Such an office is called a *centralized* office.

3. The stenographer-clerk, sometimes called a junior stenographer, whose full time is not taken up with shorthand and transcribing but who also has duties of a clerical nature.

4. The reporting stenographer, who reports meetings. This position is rather rare, but a very desirable one. It calls for high speed and carries with it varied responsibilities, pleasant contacts, and a certain amount of variety. Large corporations often need such special service.

Each of these stenographic positions makes different demands. After making good as a stenographer in the first or second classification, you may become a secretary, depending upon your ability and the way you have demonstrated it. The third group offers the most usual beginning job. Certainly, fresh from school, you would hardly start as a reporting stenographer. But later on, if you are good enough in your line to be a reporting stenographer, you might become a public stenographer with offices of your own, serving clients who do not have enough steady work to employ full-time stenographers. Often, a very good living is made in

this type of work by women whose offices are in hotels or downtown office buildings.

Still another career open to you as a top-speed stenographer is that of court reporter. This involves taking down court proceedings, public commission hearings, and legislative sessions in shorthand and transcribing them from your notes. But to be a successful court reporter, you must be exceptionally facile in shorthand. The speed necessary is at least 200 words a minute. Court reporting calls, too, for exceptional endurance, since the work is exacting and the hours are apt to be long. Possibly for some of these reasons, more men than women succeed as court reporters, although in New York City one court reporter out of every four is a woman.

#### HERE'S THE OFFICE ORGANIZATION PICTURE

If you want to start out as a stenographer, you will be faced with some important questions. From what quarter will your advancement come most readily? Should you work in a small office or a large one? Especially if you live in the East, you will have to decide whether to apply to a firm that has a decentralized stenographic office, or the newer type of central stenographic bureau. It is estimated, by the way, that in New York and Boston 50 per cent of the placements today are in centralized offices and the other 50 per cent in decentralized offices. In Chicago, I am told, fewer than 50 per cent of the jobs are in centralized offices, and the number decreases the farther west you go.

Although as a beginner you may have to take work where you can find it, you should be familiar with the trends in modern business. Only then will you be able to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages to you of jobs that may fall in any of these four main groupings. Even if you live in a small town or city, where practically all the offices are either small or decentralized, you should still be informed as to your chances of advancement when starting your career there. You may not stay there forever, you know!

**The Decentralized Office.** In such an office you may find yourself alone or one of a dozen or more employees. Though you will work under the direction of one of the executives or a department head, you will be more or less on your own. Your work may be assigned to you by the chief himself, by another executive, or by an older employee, or you may have to dig it out for yourself. Here you will learn a little of this and a little of that, in an unorganized fashion. There may be no set standard for the appearance of your work; you may sacrifice neatness to speed, acquire bad typing habits, and get off to a poor start because of lack of supervision and direction. On the other hand, if you have initiative, are a good self-organizer, and are willing to discipline yourself, you may sometimes find advancement more quickly in this type of organization than in one where the stenographic work is centralized. But it is only fair to warn you that the one- or two-man office is apt to have an end point that is reached almost at the start. Then the only recourse for an ambitious girl is to leave and make another beginning, this time with her eyes open and her mind wary.

All small offices are decentralized, but not all decentralized offices are small. Some very large businesses have, so far, refrained from mechanizing or centralizing their offices. The large decentralized office is similar to the small one- or two-employee office in that there is no central planning or supervision of the office work. The chief difference is that in large offices the important executives have private secretaries who are responsible only to them.

In the small office, usually secretaryless, the stenographer performs many other duties besides taking dictation. If she works solo, she does all the odd jobs that are to be done and may even keep the books. In some offices, the only employee apart from the bookkeeper takes dictation from all the executives, runs the switchboard, acts as receptionist and file clerk, and does any typing needed. If you become such a general factotum you will find everybody in the office expecting you to perform secretarial work for him. "The girl" will look up library data.

"The girl" will break appointments. "The girl" will do any errands—even to buying theater tickets. Everybody will want his letters out first, regardless of their importance, and there will be no one to take your part and work out a program, unless you can interest the boss in doing it. Some young women thrive on all this responsibility. They love it. But don't make the mistake of thinking there is much advancement in such a position. Experience—yes, but not promotion. For your comfort on such a job, if you are bent on the accolade of "secretary," this is one stenographic job in which you may appropriate the title to yourself, but skip the "private"!

**The Centralized Office.** The centralized stenographic and transcription department, found today in large business firms throughout the country, is the product of the application of the principles of scientific management and mass production to the work of an office. In this type of organization, the stenographic and typing work for the entire business is centralized in one department in charge of a transcription supervisor. Only the president of the firm and a few of the more important executives have secretaries. When stenographic service is needed by other executives, a request is made to the supervisor, who sends a member of the stenographic force to take the dictation. Minor executives are required to use voice machines, and a corps of machine transcribers works constantly, taking from cylinders the dictation of men whom they rarely meet.

Banks, insurance companies, brokerage houses, telephone companies, laboratories, manufacturers, railway companies, and law firms are among the important businesses that have adopted the centralized department. Most law offices do not use voice machines, but instead, the stenographic department, staffed by high-grade legal stenographers, functions for lawyers in the large firms who do not rate private secretaries of their own. This latter method is used extensively in Government offices in Washington and other cities, where the stenographic section is called a "pool." At one time the legal department of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation in Washington had a pool of 200 skilled legal stenographers.

The centralized department had its inception in the early twenties in law offices, insurance companies, and banks, but it took a depression to bring it to full flower. When executives faced the need of economizing on the nonproductive side of business, the result in many instances was centralizing of the stenographic work. The saving, variously estimated as from one-third to a half over the decentralized office, has been so well received by boards of directors that there is little likelihood that the system will be abandoned by the firms where it has been installed. Daily new converts are being made for this simplified, efficient, and economical method of handling the correspondence work in large organizations. Regardless of where you start, you should watch this trend, as it is apt to affect you sooner or later.

As evidence of the extent to which the new system has grown in some localities, there is in New York a club called the Transcription Supervisors' Association, whose membership is made up solely of women in charge of from ten to a hundred or more girls in such central departments. This club was founded in 1930 with but thirteen members. It now has sixty-six members. There is a similar club in Chicago, called the Office Supervisors' Club, which publishes its own house organ, *The Centralizer*.

Perhaps you think you wouldn't like working under this system. Before you decide definitely, consider the advantages. The members of the Transcription Supervisors' Association (a list of whose employers reads like a "Who's Who" of American business), say that *secretaries in their firms are almost invariably promoted from the stenographic departments*. In their opinion, and they ought to know, if you wish eventually to become a private secretary in a big corporation you must start in a centralized department. Also leading out of the stenographic work in a centralized bureau are such positions as head stenographer, assistant supervisor, supervisor, and office manager. So think twice before you turn down a job that has such promotional possibilities.

A supervisor in a New York office outlines the advantages to the operator in a centralized bureau where voice machines predominate, as follows:



1. Uniform standards of performance for all jobs of major importance.

2. An opportunity to become proficient in many skills beyond stenography and typing, since most large offices have up-to-date mechanical equipment of various kinds for manifolding, etc.

3. The use of manuals that outline a company's methods and business policy.

4. Written instead of oral instructions when assigning work—thus eliminating unnecessary questions and the danger of misunderstanding.

5. A more normalized day's work. Under supervision, mail for local districts is held for the next day, in order that preference may be given to mail taking longer for delivery.

6. Help on rewrites. Often a stenographer working for an individual has much rewriting to do at the end of the day, through no fault of her own. This "necessary evil" can be disposed of very quickly in a large department with the assistance of several members.

Where a centralized department uses no voice machines, as in many law offices, the chief advantage to you as a beginning stenographer is that you get a broad experience by taking dictation from a number of executives. If, perhaps, your vocabulary is limited, this sort of work extends it immeasurably. Naturally, when the correspondence of each man deals with a different phase of the business, you are bound, as you work, to build up the background you need for a higher position in the company.

#### **ANOTHER STRING TO YOUR BOW**

**Operating a Voice Machine.** But if you can't start as a stenographer and are a rapid typist, why not consider the voice machine? As was said in Chapter II, the growing use of dictating machines has extended the field of the expert typist into that of machine transcriber. If possible, in addition to your knowledge of shorthand, add to your vocational equipment before you leave school the ability to transcribe from cylinders. This is another string to your bow when you go job hunting.

For there are jobs to be had, if you are good at voice-machine work. For example, in one large New York insurance office with which I am acquainted, in addition to forty secretaries, there are ninety-four girls in the correspondence department, working chiefly with dictating machines.

Also, employment agencies in many cities report difficulty in finding girls with training or experience in machine transcribing. The fact is that, to date, in spite of new jobs on the horizon, students are more interested in the human than the mechanical aspect of getting out the correspondence. In an effort to diagnose the reluctance of students to learn voice-machine operation, one commercial teacher said: "All the success stories are written about the girl who became a private secretary. There are no success stories written about the young women who operate office machines."

The Faith Baldwin or the Kathleen Norris who will popularize a heroine who transcribes for ten unseen dictators will perform a great service to the oncoming generation of businesswomen. As a matter of fact, the boss has been greatly overrated as a matrimonial prospect, whereas a well-paying job has often been known to provide the means and background for desirable social contacts outside the job.

Be it understood that you have to be very good indeed to become a successful voice-machine operator. This is no occupation for the person with a low I.Q. or inadequate preparation in English. As one transcription supervisor said: "The voice-machine operator does not have to worry about the accuracy of her outlines, but she does have to concentrate very carefully on the dictation in order to produce an intelligent result. Some words sound alike; others are mispronounced or incoherently spoken; and it is only by distinguishing the meaning or by grasping the sense of the dictation that one is able to transcribe accurately. The actual handling of the voice machine is learned quickly, but I feel that the operator should be given at least the same educational background as the stenographer. The operator does not hear the dictation, as does the stenographer, and there-

fore she cannot preview it. Being removed from the dictator, her common sense and her judgment are challenged constantly, and for that reason she needs the foundation of a large vocabulary and a real understanding of words."

**Positions Well Paid.** You may share the general misconception regarding the pay of voice-machine operators. Actually they are paid on a par with stenographers, perhaps because of the demand for their services. In some offices machine transcription is handled on a salary basis, in others on a line and bonus basis. Under the bonus plan many voice-machine operators earn as much as do private secretaries. A person must be a rapid typist to make a good dictating-machine operator. In offices where transcribing is compensated on the line basis, the greater the operator's typing speed the more she can earn.

Sometimes the bonus system carries a guaranteed salary for a minimum amount of work, say 4,000 lines a week, with a bonus for any lineage beyond that figure. Under this plan an elaborate system has been worked out for penalizing an operator for her mistakes, but she is paid for retyping letters where the errors are made by the dictator. Some operators, under the bonus system, turn out seventy-five to a hundred letters a day. Another method of paying by piecework measures output in cyclometer points, that is, by strokes on the typewriter rather than by lines typed.

Regardless of the system used, each operator must turn in a daily production slip to the supervisor so that daily records of output can be kept. On page 57 is an actual production form which the voice-machine operators in the offices of a large industrial corporation use to record their output each day. At the end of the month the same form is used to summarize each operator's work record.

You may not like working under such pressure. Some young women do and some don't. It is not to your discredit if you prefer a less high-powered way of working.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Margery Fitch was the daughter of a successful businesswoman. Because her mother

## RECORD OF PRODUCTION

Department	Voice machine			Typ- ing	Misc.	Substitutions	
	Time	Let- ters	Lines	Time	Time	Secre- tarial time	Gen- eral time
Accounting							
Electrical, and Con- struction Material							
Freight							
General Sales New York							
General Sales Chicago							
Manufacturers							
Merchants							
Order and Warehouse							
Treasury							
Grand total							

was familiar with business trends, she saw to it that Margery was trained for voice-machine work. Margery had no trouble getting a job in a centralized office, and she made good money each week. But how she hated the drive! She was on a team, and if her team turned out a certain number of lines a week every member received a bonus. Although Margery never got beyond the minimum number of lines in her work, she nonetheless shared in her team's extra pay. This made her feel that she was a drag on the others. She was sure they must hate her for being slow, though of course no one ever said so. Margery felt as

though she were working in a fog. She never quite knew what it was all about, and eventually she became so unhappy that she quit. Now Margery is employed in a small office where she works directly under the head of a department and receives a stipulated weekly salary. Her mother says that she is a different girl since she made the change.

### **MEN WANTED!**

Before the Second World War, one of the best places for an ambitious young man to start his career was in a secretarial or stenographic position in a type of business in which he wished to spend his business life. His contact with executives whose dictation he took and the knowledge of the business that he thus acquired fitted him for advancement to minor executive positions as openings occurred. Then, provided that he had the personality requirements, his further progress was assured.

In war industries 4-Fs and other young men exempt from military service, provided that they were employed in essential work, found shorthand highly valuable. Although many girls showed surprising ability in grasping engineering and other technical vocabularies and knowledge, the occasional male secretary who already had that background was a timesaver to overburdened executives.

Just how much interest this method of advancing into the innermost circles of business via the stenographic route will hold for returning servicemen is difficult to say. Many of them have done administrative work in the army or navy, where the multiplicity of forms and detail may have prejudiced them against further office work. However, one thing is certain. Where a young man feels he has special talents for business, it will pay him to become adept at typing and shorthand, for through them he can be confident of advancement into an executive position. Needless to say, a good general education and proved ability of a high order are prerequisites.

**Where the Jobs Are.** Railroad, oil, steel, air-line, mining, construction, and engineering companies head the list of those

which express a preference for men secretaries, when these are available. It is not only because of the logical line of promotion of informed male employees into junior executive positions, with vistas ahead, that these businesses like to employ men in stenographic work. There are often times when the secretary must travel with an executive, and to tell Tom to be ready to go to Washington with his chief tomorrow night is less complicated than to tell Estelle the same thing.

But take a second look at the type of firms listed as especially interested in the male secretary. You will see that they are all technical or at least semitechnical in character. The proverbial masculine understanding of and liking for technical subjects, not to mention an education in them in some instances, gives boys a break here.

Another field also not exclusively masculine, but where a top man can really go places with shorthand, is that of court reporter or general reporter. This is one of the least crowded professions for men, and a well-paying one. But for either men or women, court reporting takes not only great accuracy in shorthand but *speed*, and I mean *speed*—not only speed in taking notes but speed in transcription. Court reporting is not a place where one starts, but something to plan for and work up to over the years.

The demand for male secretaries is a definite one, but it is limited because of the exceptionally high requirements. When the educational, character, personality, and appearance requirements have been met, the male applicant will need to be better at typing, taking dictation, and transcribing, because he will start at a higher level and a higher salary than can his feminine competitor. He won't have to start in a centralized department to get a chance at a secretarial job, nor would he be hired there. He will start as stenographer or even as secretary.

### **JOBS FOR THE MATHEMATICALLY MINDED**

**The Position of Bookkeeper-stenographer.** Suppose that you are equally prepared to enter business from either the shorthand or the bookkeeping approach. Then you may be interested in

one of two possible occupations—that of the bookkeeper-stenographer or of the stenographer-bookkeeper. The work that would occupy more than half your time is indicated by putting it first in the hyphenated title. Usually, this combination job occurs in a small office where there is neither enough bookkeeping nor enough stenography to occupy one person's full time. However, in either case, you might have to keep a simple set of books, and you had better not tackle it unless you are able to keep them.

Should you prefer a small office to a large one and like a variety of duties, this combination of work is often a happy one. It has the added advantage of giving you, as a beginner, an opportunity to try out two widely different kinds of office work and to judge which you like better. The young person with a flair for mathematics is likely to be better satisfied in a position where at least part of the work has to do with figures. If you find yourself taking greater interest in the figuring end, you need have no hesitancy in deciding to go ahead into full-time bookkeeping and to begin spending your evenings in study for this next step forward.

Sometimes the combined bookkeeper-stenographer is employed in a small store where only one person is needed to keep track of all purchases and sales. If you are successfully filling such a job and enjoying it, you would be justified in centering your career plan on the division of finance in department-store work. Accounting and control constitute one of the four main functions of big business in the retail field. It is estimated that about 10 per cent of all the workers in store occupations are engaged in this important division. In large stores it may occupy several floors with its bookkeeping machines, calculating machines, typewriters, filing cabinets, and other equipment.

The credit side of retailing also affords interesting work for the mathematically competent, and the various retail credit men's associations throughout the country (including women members) are considered an important group in every community.

**Positions as Statistical Clerks.** Statistical work, largely in Government offices, has opened up a comparatively new and very attractive field for the young man or woman with mathe-

mathematical ability. Most of these positions are under Civil Service. The United States Government classifies its statistical workers as statistical clerks and statisticians. The former includes junior statistical, assistant, senior, principal, and head statistical clerks.

Although the statistical clerk need not be a college graduate, a thorough grounding in mathematics and statistics on the college level is necessary. Some knowledge of economics is also helpful. These subjects can be mastered by evening attendance at a university, if your stick-to-itiveness equals your ambition. It goes without saying that the statistical clerk must know how to operate business machines.

Apart from Government, business in general is employing more and more statistical workers. Banks, insurance companies, business research organizations, publishers of periodicals, and many industries are new fields for this type of work.

**Beginning as an Assistant Bookkeeper.** No matter how good your training, as a beginner you will practically never start in a full-time job in the bookkeeping field higher than that of assistant bookkeeper. Be glad you can't. The responsibility is much too great for anyone unfamiliar with general business practices. But if you like to work with figures, why not plan to look for a position as an assistant bookkeeper? It is an excellent way to get practical training under an experienced person, for in large offices bookkeepers work under accountants and are delegated to keep various detail records. By outside study, coupled with your training on the job, you could prepare yourself to assume full responsibility for the books of a partnership or a corporation.

"But what about bookkeeping as a career?" you may well ask. I'm glad to tell you that in spite of the many mechanical inventions that have threatened to put the human bookkeeping machine out of business, the 1940 census showed only a 7 per cent decrease in the number of bookkeepers and accountants from 1930. This would indicate that hand bookkeeping still has an important place in office work, even though as part of his equipment the bookkeeper will need to know how to run a calculating



machine. Actually, the importance of complete and accurately kept accounting records has increased tremendously during recent years. The efficient business executive today must know without delay all changes in the condition of his firm. He must have constantly at his command an array of facts and figures on which to base his decisions. Where shall he turn but to his bookkeepers and accountants?

A continuance of positions in this field may be expected not only now but for some time to come. For all but the smallest firms, bookkeeping has been greatly complicated by new Federal and State laws that require an enormous amount of statistical reporting. State and Federal income tax laws, sales and use taxes, the franchise tax, social security and unemployment insurance legislation, as well as numerous other enactments, require periodical reports that must be prepared by the accounting departments of practically all businesses. This means more jobs for trained persons. And since these records have to be handled again in State and Federal offices, there are hundreds of new Civil Service jobs, as well as new jobs in private businesses.

Bookkeeping as a profession leads to accountancy as a profession, if you so choose. The route, according to A. C. Ernst of the famous accounting firm of Ernst and Ernst, goes something like this: First you get a job as a bookkeeper in a small industrial or commercial organization, or you work as an assistant in the accounting department of a larger business or as junior accountant in a public accounting firm. Mr. Ernst feels that even though one expects to enter private practice as a C.P.A., the insight into business gained by working in an industrial or commercial firm for several years is invaluable.

As a junior in public accounting, your work would be done under the observation of experienced men. And as you merited it, you would advance through the ranks to semisenior, senior, supervisor, and then to executive. The members of the staff in most public accounting organizations specialize in some particular branch, such as system work, taxes, retail-store accounting, hotel accounting, or bank auditing. At the same time they maintain a familiarity with all branches of accountancy.

My personal feeling, based on employment experience, is that every commercial student should have some basic training in bookkeeping. When I was placing girls through a New York employment agency, we had numerous requests for a combination of shorthand, typing, and a little bookkeeping. When I called the placement bureaus of several private schools I was told, "So few of our students like figures; they don't study bookkeeping." On the other hand, there were schools that required all students to take a general course in bookkeeping, and from them I could always get a suitable applicant for the frequent combination job.

Naturally every student has not sufficient flair for figures to do advanced work in this field, and I am recommending that only to the mathematically minded. The latter, when well trained, will find plenty of opportunity to interpret accounts for the purpose of management in some "live" business, and if he wishes, to go later into public or private accounting work.

So, it is easy enough to see how, if you have a liking for figures and choose the higher brackets of bookkeeping as your goal, you can begin to plan your career with more or less certainty from the day you leave a business school.

**Working as a Calculating-machine Operator.** Many school and other placement bureaus report an inability to fill all the requests they have for skilled calculating-machine operators. This includes beginners as well as experienced workers. Because of the scarcity of competent operators, this field of business skills is considered in many localities to be one of the best for beginners. And with the increase of mechanical figuring methods in business, it seems likely that this field will become more and more important as time goes on.

Generally speaking, positions calling for skill in the operation of calculating machines fall into two groups which we shall designate as junior and senior. Junior positions require skilled operators who spend part of their time typing, filing, working on the books, and even taking dictation. The senior positions require the full time of operators who are highly skilled on all rotary- and key-drive calculating machines. In addition to business openings, both the United States and State Civil

Services offer well-paid positions to those who can pass the examinations for either junior or senior calculating-machine operators.

Why not put in some time learning these machines before you leave school? If you like arithmetic and are familiar with all the fundamental processes of it; if you can write numerals rapidly and legibly, knowing how to operate a calculating machine might be the open-sesame to a good junior job. I must warn you, however, that good eyesight and the physical ability to work at high speed over long periods of time are as essential as your special skill. You have heard it said, no doubt, that the machine is an extension of personality. Well, these machines that add, subtract, multiply, divide, and then some, certainly extend your personality in a way that is thrilling to some persons and utterly nerve-racking to others.

By learning enough about operating a calculating machine in school to hold a junior position, you can easily determine whether you like the work well enough to take additional evening courses in advanced machine calculation. This is the road to a senior position, at considerable advance in salary. And it's worth thinking about, right now, in connection with that plan you are making for your business life.

**Operating Other Business Machines.** What has been said about the calculating machine is equally true of other machines, such, for instance, as those that do bookkeeping and billing mechanically. A New York placement director remarked recently: "We find a definite need for the right kind of persons who can operate a comptometer, a billing machine, or a dictating machine. These positions were the hardest to fill during the lowest depths of the 1930's. I wish the schools would divert those students who are not particularly adapted to stenography into the field of office appliances." So, you can see, if you have a liking for this type of work, you would do well to get specific training along these lines. Many office-machine manufacturers maintain schools where they teach the operating of their machines to young people who have graduated from business courses.

Since they are in constant touch with the business firms that have purchased or leased their machines, these companies are often able to place promising applicants whom they have trained. This is a tip you can look into at your leisure after you leave school, provided, of course, that you are strongly attracted to machine methods of figuring as opposed to the hand systems. New machines are coming on the market all the time. You, as a prospective office worker, will need to keep informed, whether you use these contrivances or not. So keep your eyes open, read the business magazines, and be ever alert for inventions that may tend to revolutionize the work you are now preparing to do.

### POSSIBILITIES IN CIVIL SERVICE

As you may know, there are office positions in Federal, State, and County Civil Service for which examinations are given at stated times. Although the majority of these positions call for some experience in the particular type of work, there are some for which beginners can qualify. I suggest that if you are interested in going into Civil Service you ask your teachers for further information. In all probability, your school has the listings that show when the different stenographic and clerical examinations will next be given in your locality. If not, your teachers can tell you where to write to get this information and whether your state has adopted the merit system of choosing employees. You may also secure from your local post office printed sheets announcing forthcoming examinations for the Federal Service positions; or you may write to the United States Civil Service Commission, Washington, D.C., and be put on their mailing list.

Sound preparation for commercial service, such as you are getting in school, usually lays a good foundation for Civil Service examinations of comparable types. When you have chosen a particular job for which you wish to qualify, you should find out the requirements and make such additional preparation as you will need. There is a stated time during which applications are taken for each examination, and if you are applying you will

have ample time to do the necessary studying in advance of the examination.

There is much to be said in favor of Civil Service positions. In clerical and stenographic work they pay better, as a rule, than similar positions in private business. Once in, you can better your position by taking the promotional examinations as they are given and so step on up. I know a girl who over a period of six years has, by taking examinations, attained ten or twelve Civil Service ratings, and who is now holding a very responsible and well-paid position.

As your teachers will tell you, your name is put on a list according to your standing following the examination, and you then wait to be called. The first six months on any Civil Service job are a trial period. After you have made good, your position is secure. Many people value the security of such employment, especially those who dislike change. Then there are those who get a thrill out of working for the world's largest employer—"Uncle Sam."

As you are being taught in school, business has well-defined standards for every office position. Let us now discuss briefly what will be expected of you in some of the various positions that we talked of in this and the preceding chapter.

### QUESTIONS

1. How many different kinds of stenographic positions can you name? How do their duties differ?
2. Which would attract you most? Why?
3. In which do you think a beginner would be most likely to secure employment?
4. What is the present-day trend in office organization?
5. What has brought this about?
6. Is it correct to say that the centralized stenographic department is actually the setting up of a letter shop inside an office?
7. Would the title "correspondence department" be a correct name for a centralized stenographic bureau?
8. Explain the expression "stenographic pool." Where is this term largely used?

9. What is the person in charge of a centralized department called?
10. Do men hold these positions in the large offices where this system is used?
11. Are male stenographers employed in centralized stenographic departments?
12. Name some types of business that have changed from the decentralized to the centralized method of handling correspondence.
13. In what part of the country is this system used most at present?
14. Can you think of several reasons why this is so?
15. Do all centralized bureaus use voice machines as well as stenographers and secretaries?
16. Are all decentralized offices small offices?
17. What is the setup when a large business handles its correspondence work in decentralized fashion?
18. If you were a typist and were told you were to be trained for promotion into the position of voice-machine operator, would you be pleased? Would you quit? Why?
19. What types of business like to employ male stenographers?
20. What are the personal qualifications for men stenographers and secretaries? Why are they so high?
21. Name several office positions which only those who are mathematically minded should enter.
22. What would you consider the best beginning job for a person of marked mathematical ability who planned to go through the book-keeping gate into accountancy, as soon as he could finance the necessary additional study?
23. What besides the skillful running of the machine is necessary if one is to succeed as a calculating-machine operator?
24. If you were unable to secure a position in the kind of work you think now you prefer in private business, would you investigate Civil Service?

#### WHAT IS WRONG WITH THESE STATEMENTS?

1. A beginning stenographer whose dictation speed is good can start as a court reporter if he or she will work very hard.
2. A centralized stenographic bureau means that all the office force sit together in the middle of the building.
3. The telephone is sometimes called a voice machine.
4. There are today more male stenographers than business can find places for.

5. It is not necessary to be good in mathematics to become a bookkeeper.

6. Anyone who has studied bookkeeping in school can call himself an accountant and apply for an accounting job.

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the two major types of office organization—the decentralized and the centralized.

2. What are the advantages of working in a decentralized office? The disadvantages?

3. State what you consider the advantages of starting out in a centralized stenographic bureau. The disadvantages.

4. If you aspire to become a private secretary to an executive in a large corporation in an Eastern city, which of these types of organization will you probably need to work up in?

5. Assume that you start as a stenographer-clerk in a small business where there are only two other employees besides yourself. Discuss the difference in duties and responsibility between this type of position and one where you would be one of 100 office workers under constant direction and supervision. Be prepared to give your reasons for thinking yourself better suited for one or the other position.

6. Based on what you know of the kind of work done in a large office (not necessarily centralized) as compared with that in a small office, which do you think would give you the more valuable experience?

7. Discuss why businesses such as railroads, air lines, oil, and mining companies like to employ men in secretarial work.

8. Like most manufacturers of mechanical equipment, the two major companies making voice machines were occupied with Government contracts throughout most of the time we were at war. In May, 1945, the Government gave these firms permission to resume the manufacture of dictating machines for private use.

If you know someone who works in a centralized office, find out how they managed during the years when they could obtain no new equipment. Remember, this was the period when stenographers were also scarce, so that the simple switch-over from dictating to a machine to dictating to a girl with notebook and pencil was scarcely practicable.

In some war industries, because they had nothing to sell, the correspondence fell off considerably during the years when they were manufacturing exclusively for Uncle Sam. Ascertain whether this was a

factor which eased the load in the centralized office with which you have a contact.

9. If you are fond of spelling and interested in words, in which office positions would you probably do best? Which, if you liked to multiply and divide figures? Which, if you are inclined to keep your belongings in systematic order? What, if you like routine work? Explain your reasons.

10. Be prepared to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of Civil Service positions as compared with private employment. Do you know anyone holding a Civil Service job? If so, interview this person and bring a personal story to class for discussion.

### PROJECTS

1. Your text states that there are several different methods of payment for voice-machine operators. If possible, find a business in your locality that has adopted dictating machines for some of its work and ascertain what system of compensation is used. Try to find out whether the operators make as much as the stenographers employed in that same company or in similar companies that do not use voice machines. Bring this information to class in the form of a report. Include in the report, if possible, what method is used in this office to record each operator's daily production and the minimum number of lines each is expected to turn out in a week's time.

2. Write a 500-word paper on the difference between the positions of stenographer-bookkeeper and bookkeeper-stenographer. Depending upon which gateway interests you most, state your preference between these two jobs as a starting point.

3. Look up and present a written report to class on what Civil Service examinations for junior office positions will next be given in your locality. Your information should include the stated requirements for taking the examinations; where the examinations will be given and when; whether the examination is for a Federal, State, County, or Municipal Civil Service position; the duties of each position, as announced; the salary paid. Check and report upon whether these positions are better paid than the same are in private business in your vicinity.

**NOTE:** Do not report upon positions that call for experience.



## CHAPTER IV

### WHAT BUSINESS WANTS IN SKILLS AND ABILITIES

You may be a bit "jittery" about that beginning job just ahead of you. What will it be like? What will be expected of you? As nearly as is practical, your classes in office practice have been set up to approximate the conditions you will meet. Thus, at least, some of your preparation has been realistic. So far, so good! And you need not get stage fright when you step over the threshold of school into business if you know exactly how you rate in skills and abilities.

But in order to approach job hunting with confidence, you must know what business requires of you. This your teachers have been unfolding to you as they have told you, day after day, what standards prevail in the best run offices. But often it is of great assistance to have your school's statements reinforced by those of men and women who are actually in business. So this chapter is a preview of business standards by which you can measure your fitness.

Naturally, we shall not be able to cover all types of businesses. Even in the same line of work, no two organizations are exactly alike in their practices and management. But we can study a composite picture of office requirements. What I shall tell you is based on informal statements made to me by many employers in many parts of the United States in reply to direct questions as to what they expect of employees.

It may seem to you as you read this chapter that too much emphasis is placed on the skills and abilities needed by stenographers. "Why bother about a knowledge of words if I am going to be a bookkeeper?" you may ask. My assumption is that you wish to be a well-rounded young businessman or woman,

capable of being promoted from one type of office position to another as your capacities unfold. If you are studying shorthand in school you are doing so because you consider it basic for business success. The fact that you do not use it in your first, or possibly your second, position is not vastly important. Because you have this specific skill as a tool you can consider yourself in line for promotion into stenographic and secretarial work if that gateway opens to you.

I suggest that you consider the plus values recommended in this chapter as a common instrument equally basic in your preparation for business. Even though you are a general clerk, a file clerk, or an assistant bookkeeper, you will do better work if you have a sound background in spelling, grammar, and business research methods and know how to organize your time, your work, and a page of transcription. In fact the requisite abilities besides skills outlined in this chapter constitute for the young business person today a type of culture as basic as reading and writing were in an earlier epoch. Certainly you do not wish to appear illiterate when you go to work. And you will not, if you are already familiar with what business wants of office employees in addition to skills. Nothing helps so much to put you at ease and on a comparable basis with your experienced office associates as knowing, without being told, what is expected of you.

#### **SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS IN DICTATION, TYPING, AND TRANSCRIPTION**

Although a great deal has been said and written about the desirability of rapid typing, experience has shown that for office requirements the typist needs much more than the ability to copy at high speed. As a typist doing general office work you must have all-round typing competence, for you will be called upon to type all sorts of miscellaneous material. Such proficiency means that you must be accurate and work at an even, steady pace which you can maintain at a speed adequate to the work in hand. Fifty words a minute is a good pace for beginners. As you gain experience, your typing speed will increase and you

will be doing the seventy to eighty or more words of the seasoned typist.

If you find yourself in a routine typing job, these are some of the typical pieces of work you will be called upon to turn out:

1. Filling in letters and forms
2. Typing on cards
3. Copying from rough draft
4. Tabulating
5. Invoicing
6. Addressing envelopes
7. Copying form letters

In practically every one of these routine typing tasks you must be able to follow instructions carefully, be competent to think through and know what you are doing and be capable of turning out well-arranged, neat, and acceptable work. You will need to know how to spell and to understand the principles of simple arithmetic which underlie many of the forms you will be required to type.

Another duty you may encounter occasionally is taking dictation directly on the typewriter. When this happens, you must be able to arrange the letter correctly on the page as you go along. You will also have to know how to make an attractive setup for reports and other papers that may be assigned to you to get out.

**How Important Is Speed?** In a later chapter on the employment interview, you will be told that the questions most frequently asked stenographic applicants have to do with speed: "What is your dictation speed? Your transcription speed? Your typing speed?" These questions do not mean that business is concerned primarily with speed. They serve merely as a measuring stick. Speed without accuracy would be as undesirable as accuracy without speed. But since speed is a generally accepted yardstick, let us discuss, for a moment, just what are the requirements of business in regard to it.

Office managers have a good deal to say these days about the desirability of "excess capacity over the minimum requirement." This is just a technical way of describing the extra store of speed

and endurance that help the beginner to make good on his first job. Any beginner with a dictation speed of 110 words a minute has this excess capacity. In actual practice 100 words is a good general average. Of course, speed requirements vary, not only with individuals but also with different sections of the country. A good employment agency will tell you what is considered desirable in your locality; and your school, too, knows what local employers expect as a measure of competency.

Before you leave school it would be well for you to be sure that your speeds in dictation, typing, and transcription are a little above business requirements in your city or town. This will give you confidence and do much to rout the stage fright from which many beginners suffer when they first go to work. The proficiency needed to build up an adequate reserve of speed can be acquired through study and patient practice or by familiarity with the dictated material.

One reason for the desirability of above-average speed is that businessmen are irregular in their dictation tempo. Some dictate very slowly; others rattle off at an alarming rate, and still others get bursts of speed that can easily befuddle you. And you can never tell, when you take your first job, which type of dictator you are going to encounter. Even though his dictation varies between 65 and 120 words a minute and he may never reach a higher rate of fluency in tossing words across his desk, the average employer expects his stenographer to be able to take his dictation at whatever rate he chooses to speak. Very few employers are so inconsiderate, however, as not to give a beginner a little time to adjust herself to his methods. But at the end of that brief period even the kindest employer will expect proficiency according to his standards. From then on, woe betide the beginner who tries to make capital of her newness on the job!

Transcription speed varies with the individual. Actually, a stenographer's salary depends upon her transcription speed. What good does it do to take shorthand notes rapidly, if you transcribe so slowly that the initial gain is lost? Then too, it is the dictator who actually determines how fast his letters are

taken down, even by the most experienced stenographer. He may dictate slowly, or he may waste your time by looking up material and answering telephone calls while you wait at his desk pencil in hand. So your chance to make up for delays and interruptions, over which you have no control, comes when you are alone with your notes and a good typewriter.

**The Dictator's Vocabulary.** One of the things that will affect your dictation speed is the vocabulary used by the businessmen for whom you work. In many businesses the dictation is confined to words that seldom average over 1.2 to 1.4 syllables per word. Such words are among the 1,000 to 2,000 commonest in the English language. You might take 120 words a minute with ease in this type of dictation, but find yourself slowed down to 80 words by a dictator whose vocabulary consisted of a great number of unusual or many-syllabled words. Generally speaking, university offices, publishing houses, advertising agencies, and authors hold the record for using "two-dollar" words. If the dictator also has a personal mannerism of speaking rapidly, you might easily find your excess-ability reserve running low. A stenographer with a limited vocabulary would have no difficulty in taking dictation in a wholesale house or even in a bank, where the dictation is largely routine. But let this same person change to a position where she is given highly original letters containing lengthy words and she will find she has more than her shorthand to worry about.

Virginia Wilson, a beginning stenographer, had worked for a few months in the general office of a small magazine when one day she was asked to take dictation from the editor, in the absence of his secretary. Before she entered business, Virginia had graduated from the college preparatory course in high school, and she knew her Latin, but philosophy had not yet entered her young life or her vocabulary. When the editor glibly dictated a sentence containing the words "categorical imperative" Virginia's eyes popped open, but her fingers flew over the paper without hesitation. She used her head and her ear and sped to the office dictionary before transcribing her notes.

**What Is a Day's Work?** The number of letters you will be required to turn out each day depends upon the kind of business, the type of office organization, and the correspondence load. As an example, in a Western railway office where the centralized stenographic system prevails, each stenographer is expected to turn out eighty-five fairly short letters a day from individual dictation. Records of individual output are kept, and if a stenographer drops below her quota she is told to speed up. In some offices, where letters vary considerably in length and where dictaphones are used, the pay is regulated by the number of lines of transcription a girl can turn out in a day. This is to your advantage if your speed is high. In the home office of a large insurance company where this method is used, each girl transcribes around 1,000 lines a day. Occasionally, in an exceptional rush, a star operator will turn out 1,400 five and one-half inch lines of elite type in a seven-hour day. In one centralized office I know, the supervisor tells me that when a girl does proofreading, some card indexing, and other odd jobs, she considers the transcribing of fifty twenty-line letters from cylinders an acceptable day's work.

There is, you will find, a generally accepted standard for a day's work. And you may get quite a shock when you first come up against it. If you take dictation from several men, you are almost certain to be given letters from nine o'clock until noon. This means that you must transcribe all afternoon. The grind will be unlike anything you have previously experienced. And there will be no begging off! Letters dictated in the morning must be got out that day. They should be on the dictator's desk by four o'clock. This allows time for necessary changes to be made without stenographic overtime. And, mind you, the changes are those made by the dictator, revisions of thought or policy, *never* at this point the redoing of careless work on your part!

Changes due to your inability to read your notes or to incorrect spelling, paragraphing, or punctuation must be taken care of long before the four o'clock dead line. These, along with

typographical errors, are inexcusable in the finished transcript. Executives often ask for changes in their letters because, upon reading the transcription, they feel that the words they dictated first do not best convey the idea, or because further information that has come in during the day necessitates changing the content of the letter. This may even mean that several letters must be entirely retyped, through no fault of yours.

**Organize Yourself.** Because of the possibility of such last-minute, legitimate alterations in letters, one of the first things you will have to learn on a job is to organize yourself. You must make the very best use of your time throughout the day. Otherwise, you will be forced to leave unfinished business on your desk and will be guilty of that crime of crimes, holding untranscribed letters overnight in your notebook. And the fact of such letters being delayed in reaching their destination is not the only consideration! Worse still, they are apt to go stale on you and you are put in the uncomfortable position of asking the executive to help you read back your notes. And does that annoy him!

He will be cross because the letters did not go out promptly on the day he dictated them. He will have forgotten the wording and perhaps the gist. And he will be provoked that he must stop in the midst of a busy day to help a subordinate whose chief duty is to ease his day. He may even be irritated enough to report you for inefficiency. A complaint of this sort means trouble, and a series of them may lead to dismissal.

If you find yourself taking more dictation than you can reasonably be expected to transcribe before four o'clock, you should report to the office manager or whoever is in charge of the correspondence. But be certain that the fault is not yours! You will be fortunate if you work under an understanding supervisor who gauges the time it will take you as a beginner to adjust yourself and who sees to it that the work is laid out with fairness to both the executives and the girls under her. One such woman discovered that the stenographers in her department were working overtime on letters which did not need to go out at once.

She sent a memorandum to the executives saying: "Unless a letter is marked 'rush' the transcription department will hereafter have out-of-town mail on your desk at 4 p.m. and local mail for you at 9 a.m. the following day. This will ease the load in our department and will not seriously delay the receipt of your correspondence." However, this is a ruling that only a department head could make.

Suppose you are the only employee in an office, with a million things to do, and your boss has dictated more letters than you can possibly get out that day. What to do! In my opinion, your best move is to ask your employer frankly which letters he considers most important and which can be held over. Then, if you are well organized, you will put less important work aside and transcribe these letters at once. The next morning you will start early on the less important letters and have them on your employer's desk before the day's rush begins.

**Brush Up to Keep Up.** It is quite possible that on your first job you will have little dictation to take. Of course, your speed suffers when this happens. And it is most essential for you to keep growing in skill in order that you will be ready for the next step up when it comes. In a small Eastern city, eighty office employees went back to school at night to brush up on their dictation. When they had left school, they had all taken dictation at 110 to 130. In their brush-up class the teacher started them at 100 words dictation speed. This, she thought, would be a good average for the group. But few were successful at that rate, and a final test showed that sixty was the best the class as a whole could do. So, let me suggest that you do not let much time elapse after you have taken your first job before you begin to check up on your skills, and if you find you are slipping in any of them do something about it. Probably the best thing to do is to go back to school one or two nights a week. Or, as was suggested in Chapter II, if this is impossible, try taking down radio talks and announcements. This is considered excellent practice. If you can take this rapid-fire dictation successfully, you are good!



## SMALL BUT ESSENTIAL SKILLS

But dictation and typing are not the beginning and end of skills needed on the job. Accuracy and neatness are of great importance. For business cannot follow the rule of "*no erasures*" so prevalent in business schools. To pull out a half-filled sheet from the typewriter and begin all over again when errors have been made is too costly in time and stationery. So, whether or not your school teaches skill in making erasures, learn to do it neatly. Learn, too, to crowd inserted letters into place, when necessary, and to space out letters when words have been deleted. Naturally, such corrections have to be made very well indeed. Strikeovers, smudgy corrections, or typographical errors are never acceptable. Don't think they will be overlooked by the dictator, for they won't be. The rule, "Positively no strikeovers," must never be broken.

Another skill you should train yourself in is the ability to make as many as six clear carbons. Unless your touch is strong and even, the fifth and sixth carbons are rarely legible. This is especially important, for business as a whole has found it economical to use a good grade of carbon paper, and if your carbons are not clear the blame will fall on you.

Still another not unreasonable requirement of business is that those responsible for getting out the correspondence know how to set up a letter properly. In spite of the attention paid to letter forms in all business schools, there is a shocking indifference to the subject among transcribers. Writers and retired business executives who frequently employ stenographers by the day are amazed that so few of them seem interested in turning out attractively set up letters. One such businessman of wide experience, after putting up with careless, lopsided, or top-heavy letters, was overjoyed to get a secretary pro tem who asked, "How do you prefer to have your letters arranged?"

You will be expected, therefore, to know something about the most approved forms of setting up business letters. However, the beginner should be very careful to note the forms already in use by the employing firm and to follow them. It is a frequent

complaint among businessmen that new stenographers are careless about following the rules of form already established. Business executives would be pleased if, as a new employee, you take enough time and interest to count words and arrange margins. Such a simple precaution, regardless of the length of a letter, would result in its being properly centered on a page. "I thought from my notes that the letter was longer than it turned out to be," is a pretty thin excuse. A little experience will enable you to judge quite accurately the length of a letter in relation to your notes. So, see to it that your touch is even and sufficiently heavy to assure good carbons, that your margins are balanced and your spacing accurate. These are details of major importance that will help you win approval from the start.

It is perhaps superfluous to say that every office employee who uses a typewriter should know how to take care of one. You can only turn out the best work if your machine is in first-class condition, and though some offices subscribe to a regular cleaning and repair service, the added care you give your typewriter will show in your work. Also, when you go out on your first job, you should be able to use all the best known makes of typewriters, and you should keep informed on the new devices for machines as they appear on the market.

The duties of a typist, stenographer, or general clerk often include making stencils. In many offices you would be expected to make a setup from rough copy directly to the stencil. From stencil cutting to operating a mimeograph machine is but a step. If you can list this skill among your assets you will be that much more valuable as an employee. As I have said before, business is more interested in employees who can do several things, than it is in specialists. Many a girl has held her job throughout lean years because, in addition to being able to type and tabulate on a wide-carriage machine, she could run a duplicating machine and cut a clear stencil.

#### **THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH**

The English language is the head, tail, and backbone of the correspondence division of business. To emphasize this fact,

the dean of a collegiate school of business administration insists that shorthand and typewriting are not commercial subjects, but should be classed as English subjects.

You are fortunate if you have had the advantage of college courses in English composition and literature. Such a background helps to make the paths of beginners wide and straight. I know a girl who graduated from a State university with a degree in English. She taught a year and then decided she might be better suited to a business career. She took a business course and owing to her educational background was able to start as a secretary. From then on she had her choice of positions at the highest salaries paid for secretarial work in the city in which she lived—all owing to her knowledge of English.

However, not everyone has such an advantage, nor in many very good positions is so much English necessary. For instance, a beginner's job with a wholesale grocery company would not require a knowledge of words out of the ordinary, as most of the correspondence would be strictly related to the grocery business. Neither would the college graduate who makes a stenographic job a springboard into social service work need advanced English. The rudiments, if not more, of economics, sociology, and psychology would be far more useful. But the ambitious young person will recognize that in general a thorough knowledge of English will be a tool that can lift him or her out of the crowd. The question is how to get such knowledge after leaving school.

The principal of one business school suggests to his pupils that they make a practice of reading the editorials in the local newspapers. This type of reading is a mine of forceful ideas well expressed. You may encounter many words that are new to you. Always look up their meaning, learn to spell them, and practice using them in conversation. I think it was the late Arthur Brisbane who made the statement that, if a young man would read *The New York Times* from the front to the back every day for two years and would look up all the references with which he was unfamiliar, he would by that time have become a thoroughly educated person. Of course, there are many other ways of

stimulating one's interest in words and expression. The main thing is to realize the importance of it.

### **GOOD SPELLING NECESSARY TO SUCCESS**

Twenty years ago it was considered a sign of illiteracy to misspell a single word in a letter or composition. Now the pendulum has swung so far in the opposite direction that a good speller is rare. Students even laugh off their inability to spell with, "Oh, you don't need to know how to spell any more." If they had any idea of the number of office employees who lose their jobs because of persistent mistakes in spelling, they would get to work on this branch of English or choose another occupation. True, many employers cannot spell, but this does not mean that they will permit their letters to go out full of misspelled words. Employers are dismayed at the nonchalance of the average stenographic bad speller when her mistakes are called to her attention. Remember that part of your responsibility as a stenographer is the technical correctness of your transcriptions. Correct spelling is just as important to the perfection of your work as is your mechanical skill with a typewriter.

In centralized offices all letters are checked by the supervisor in order to detect and correct any misspelling or poor grammar. But an able supervisor will not long be patient with a girl who cannot spell, because the supervisor is there to save money. She cannot approve of the costliness of many erasures and retypings of letters.

In decentralized offices correct spelling is even more important. In this type of office organization there is no go-between to detect the offending words. Unless a beginner working in a small office more or less without supervision realizes her responsibility for perfection in spelling, her place may shortly be filled by someone who can be depended upon for accuracy.

Jane Holmes was an habitually poor speller, though she had seven years' business experience to her credit. She lost one position because of two small words she misspelled. They broke the proverbial camel's back, in this instance the patience

of two long-suffering executives. One of them dictated a statement for the newspapers in which he said, "I do not claim to be a prophet." When he read his speech in print, after Jane had typed it out and handed it to the reporters, he was astounded to see he made no claim to being a "profit." The other executive dictated, "We will not ask you to perjure your souls." The finished letter on his desk assured the recipient that his firm was not asked to perjure their "soles."

Mary Smith, a stenographer with a college degree, was amused that her employers were so old-fashioned as to fly into rages when she repeatedly spelled "too" with one "o." When Mary lost her job, she went to work in the stationery section of a department store. Mary was clever at learning the stock; she studied about paper after hours, and she took courses in salesmanship. She was ambitious to become an assistant buyer and then a buyer, and she had the qualifications. But after Mary had ruined several orders of expensive wedding invitations by misspelling the bride's name, the department head decided her initiative was overshadowed by her incompetence. This proved the death knell to Mary's hopes. Before long she was transferred to another department, where spelling was not so important. Mary felt sad about the change, for her heart was in handling fine papers. Yet she still thinks it is foolish to make such a fuss about spelling!

**Correct Spelling Can Be Learned.** Poor spellers often contend they're "born that way." "I simply can't learn to spell," they'll say, as though that ended it, "Some people are born spellers and some aren't." What feeble excuses for mental laziness! The common-sense answer is that if you can learn to spell some words you can learn to spell others. And make no mistake, if you want to succeed in stenographic work you have to be a good speller. So, if your spelling is weak, get busy and strengthen it while you are in school. Otherwise you will have to do it alone, later on, which is much the harder way.

One business executive with whom I discussed the matter of learning to spell had this suggestion to offer: "Poor spellers

should make lists of words they know they don't know, and study them. Each time a word is misspelled, or they come across a word they don't know and have to look it up, they should write it down and memorize the correct spelling. That is the only way to be entirely sure of that word in the future." But this sounds rather like locking the stable door after the horse is stolen.

Fortunately, there are helpful books that give lists of ordinary words often misspelled. And better yet, there are books that give the rules whereby you can with painstaking effort actually learn to spell words in advance of making embarrassing mistakes. One of the best of these is Woolley's *Handbook of Composition*. Woolley not only gives methods of correcting spelling faults but analyzes why some persons can't seem to spell. He doesn't believe the ability to spell is a gift withheld by evil fairies at birth but calls attention to defective vision and incorrect hearing as some of the reasons for having difficulty with words. Among other things he, too, recommends keeping a list of words you misspell, and doing something about it.

**Dictionary a Poor Crutch.** Another "out" poor spellers look to is the dictionary. "Oh, I can always use the dictionary," they say glibly and with complete self-satisfaction. To regard the dictionary as a crutch for your spelling is wishful thinking only, let me tell you! A standard dictionary is essential equipment in the modern office, but it is intended for use in defining and spelling *unusual* words. These are not the words that show up the careless or poor speller. You will have no time in a busy day to stop and look up words you should know perfectly well how to spell. Nor should you expect an employer to pay you while you repair the gaps in your educational fences.

Let's take a look at some of the "little foxes which destroy the vines"—those everyday words that the unwary don't know, and don't know they don't know. The poor speller rarely looks them up, or if he does, he doesn't remember from one time to the next how they should be spelled. So words are transcribed with *ei* instead of *ie*, or vice versa; *c* is used for *s* or *k*; or *ance* takes the place of *ence*, and *ent* for *ant*, to mention only a few. As for

"affect" for "effect," or the other way around! The disturbing effect produced by the misuse of these two words in all the offices in the country on any one day is enough to affect the sanity of those countless executives who know how to spell.

But before we put the dictionary back on its shelf and consign it to its many legitimate uses in an office, let me tell you a secret. There's a catch to using the dictionary. *Only if you know how to spell* will it be of much use to you! You have to know how to alphabetize before the dictionary will yield its treasures. How much of that sort of elementary training do you think you can get on office time?

#### A GOOD VOCABULARY IS AN ASSET

If the tests made by the Human Engineering Laboratory of Stevens Institute of Technology at Hoboken, New Jersey, tell the truth, there's a definite relationship between the size of a person's vocabulary and his success in the world. Almost invariably, these tests showed that the most successful men had the largest vocabularies. As the less and less successful were measured, their vocabularies were found to be proportionately limited.

With this in mind, I suggest that vocabulary building is a hobby which everyone from the newest beginning typist to the head of the firm could pursue to his pleasure and advantage and to the betterment of both correspondence and dispositions. A curiosity about words and a love for them that leads one spontaneously to the dictionary stimulates the imagination and will eventually rout that poverty of language that is such a handicap in business.

It is said that to read an ordinary newspaper a vocabulary of from 5,000 to 14,000 words is needed. Yet in normal conversation we use only from one-fourth to one-half of the words we recognize in print. Various estimates of the number of different words used in the average telephone call or business letter range from 700 to 2,000. In his *The Command of Words*,<sup>1</sup> S. Stephenson

<sup>1</sup> SMITH, S. STEPHENSON, *The Command of Words*, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1936.

Smith states that these estimates are far too low and concludes that anyone with a high-school education or its equivalent probably has a reading vocabulary of from 9,000 to 14,000 words. With this encouraging assurance, Smith proceeds to show how a reading vocabulary can be expanded and how words recognized in print can be taken over into daily speech.

I firmly believe that some such systematic program of self-improvement in both spoken and written English would prove one of the best means beginners could employ to get out of the novice class into that of the experienced young business person. By the same token it would probably do more to lift discouraged stenographers out of ruts and into secretarial work than any other equal investment of time and money.

"But why should I improve my vocabulary?" demands Frances Jones, who works for an executive whose dictation never rises above the second thousand commonest words. Frances should ask herself whether she expects always to work for the same person. The truth is that when a man's vocabulary is so limited his frequent mispronunciation and misuse of words place a great responsibility on the stenographer.

**Nonexistent Words.** Here, for instance, is a common error of the boss which also shows up the ignorance of the trustful transcriber: "Irregardless of your contention, we think you are to blame, and we expect you to pay the costs." How much better if you know at once that there is no such word as "irregardless." It's an easy enough matter then to substitute the word the dictator meant to use. I remember one occasion during my advertising agency days, when one of our stenographers came to me almost in tears. "Mrs. MacGibbon, what shall I do?" she wailed. "Mr. Brush is in a rage because I told him I can't find any such word as 'diffugalty' in the dictionary." I laughed and told her to write it "difficulty" and he would think her a very bright girl. You can see what had happened. The junior executive had so often playfully talked about a "diffugalty" that he thought at the moment there really was such a hybrid word.

Sometimes mistakes in dictating are the result of careless pronunciation. There will be a transposition of syllables, such



as "renumeration" for "remuneration." Or a syllable will be omitted, as in "incidently" for "incidentally," or added as in "athaletic" for "athletic." These are corrections every transcriber is expected to make. She must train herself to hear such errors and know how to correct them, if she is to be really useful to a slovenly dictator.

If a knowledge of English will smooth your way when dealing with less well-educated employers, you will find a good general background of English indispensable when you work for a highly educated executive. And how welcome you will be to such a man! To be interrupted in the flow of dictation with "I didn't catch that word, please spell it," is doubly exasperating when the dictator realizes that the trouble is not due to faulty hearing or mumbled dictation, but to actual word ignorance. The words that startle stenographers by their unfamiliar sounds are often no more unusual than "intrigue," "caucus," "inveterate," "irrelevant," or "flagrant."

**Technical Vocabularies.** Many businesses, especially technical ones, require special vocabularies, and they understand that a beginner must be trained until the unfamiliar words become part of her business equipment. The office manager of a large electrical manufacturing firm said recently, "Our particular work is very technical; we have a vocabulary and a terminology all our own. However, we do not expect a beginner to come in, either from high school or college, and know 'lumens per watt' and other such phrases we use all day long. But we do expect her to have such a good background that she will not look aghast when she hears dictated reasonably common words that are part of the everyday conversation of our executives."

The legal profession has an extensive vocabulary that can only be learned by working in a law office or going to night school for a course in legal stenography. There is such a demand for trained legal stenographers that a number of such evening courses are being offered in the larger cities. This gives experienced stenographers who are employed an opportunity to prepare for these better paying positions. Legal terminology is largely

derived from Latin. Fortunately, it is becoming more and more the custom in law offices to use the English pronunciation for Latin words and phrases. This is a big help to the stenographer who has not studied Latin.

The stock in trade of the medical stenographer is her knowledge of scientific, and especially medical, terms. The college graduate with a B.S. often finds her forte in such a position, or as a chemical secretary, after she masters shorthand.

### **NOT ALL EXECUTIVES ARE GRAMMARIANS**

You may be surprised to learn that part of your job as a good stenographer is to correct the grammatical errors of your boss. But you must do it tactfully. One of the best ways to undermine yourself is to say: "Mr. Brown, you dictated, 'What will we do now?' That's wrong. It ought to be 'What shall we do now?' If you don't mind, I'll change it." Nine times out of ten the Mr. Browns of the business world are too busy or too uninformed to notice when such changes have been made. So why mention them? Once in a while you come up against executives who are sensitive about their lack of education and perversely defend their errors. "I don't care what the rule is, I want it to sound the way people talk," they will say. All you can do under such circumstances is to transcribe the dictation exactly as it is given you.

Susan Dean found this out in time to save a brand-new job. She had a degree in English and was overjoyed when the president of a manufacturing company employed her with the instruction that she was to make the correspondence of the executives more nearly grammatical. After Susan had straightened out their faulty construction and removed the split infinitives, the dictators did not recognize their own statements. They complained so loudly that Susan hastened to retype their letters as dictated, mistakes and all. Though the president of the company was a family friend, Susan wisely said nothing to him about the incident. Except for correcting an occasional "you was" or a mistake such as "talk it over with Mr. Day and I," she followed

her intuition. Better far to type "Yours of the ultimate instant received and contents noted," than suddenly to join the ranks of the unemployed! Not every executive wishes to be corrected, and not all of them realize the value of good grammatical construction.

It isn't likely that on a beginning job you will be given the full responsibility for sending out correct letters. But when you become a full-fledged stenographer you may be employed in an office where dictators are completely dependent upon their amanuenses. Under such circumstances executives often dictate hurriedly, without regard for form. "You fix it up," they will tell you confidently. Your responsibility then is heavy indeed. You must know the parts of speech and their proper usage, as well as all about nouns and their antecedents, and the rules governing their agreement. Sentence structure, case, mode, and tense become matters of moment in your life. Sometimes you will have to consult a good rhetoric or grammar to trail a fine point—such as the use of the subjunctive—until you find the answer. You must be so familiar with the rules governing punctuation, paragraphing, hyphenation, capitalization, abbreviation, and syllabication that you know just what to do with a notebook full of straight dictation.

Actually, work of this sort is editing and calls for editorial skill. You will find much sound help and advice in several of the printed handbooks for secretaries, now on the market. And even though you are a beginner doing general typing, it is not too soon for you to get one of these excellent guides and study it. Such "reaching for the stars" will prepare you for advancement.

### THE GOOD SECRETARY COMPOSES LETTERS

Be assured that a flair for English composition is one sure route from stenographic to secretarial work. As one executive expressed it, "A business man has to spend so much time directing the work of others, he is often pinched for time to give to his own work." He went on to say that the greatest aid he had

found was a secretary who could answer half of his letters without his dictating them. Describing his perfect secretary he added, "I can say to her, 'Tell him no,' and she will write a polite but definite note settling the matter. In contrast to this I've had stenographers who, given such an order, would write, 'Dear Sir: He says no. Very truly yours.' Of course, such girls will never become secretaries."

If you go to work for a not-too-large business firm you may find a great deal of food for your ambition. For instance, if you are capable, you will soon learn to take routine correspondence off the hands of the busy executive for whom you work. Katherine Hall started out as stenographer to the sales manager of a fair-sized manufacturing firm. She soon learned from his dictation the sort of letters he customarily wrote to the salesmen. Her next step was to study the salesmen's territories. She watched for her chance and when it came she was ready to say to her boss: "Here are letters from four of the salesmen wanting to know when the new catalog will be ready; and two of them in near-by states wish to come in over the week end. I know about the catalogs, and if you'll settle the week-end plans I can write the salesmen without taking your time for dictation." Soon her boss gratefully dumped all such correspondence on her. Katherine knew how to write clear and tactful letters to which the sales manager was glad to sign his name. And what a hound she was for watching detail!

In some businesses a number of correspondents are employed who compose letters without dictation. In one manufacturing plant I know, the general manager handles all his work in this way. He keeps six able secretaries busy. Each one is in charge of a division of the correspondence, such as advertising, purchasing, brokers, and so on. The sales territory is divided among several of them. The manager discusses with each in turn what he wishes to have written, and then the secretary prepares the letters and brings them to him for his approval and signature.

**"INFORMATION PLEASE"**

In many firms you will be expected to know not only English but a dozen other things. As a stenographer you will be looked upon as a source of all kinds of miscellaneous information. For instance, if an executive asks, "Do they measure distance in miles or kilometers in San Salvador?" and you don't know, you should say, "I don't know, but I'll find out." And find out you must, within a few minutes or at most a few hours. The question would not have been asked if it were not important. Similarly, if an executive wishes to quote something in a letter and is not sure either of the exact wording or of the source, you will have to take the slender clue given you and proceed to look it up.

To do this creditably, you can see that your skills and abilities should range far beyond the limits of mechanical facility. Part of your training should be to know what you will need and where to find it. In some offices you will find a good reference library ready to your hand. But it is just as well to build up your own. Dictionaries, grammars, rhetorics, and handbooks are practically part of your stock in trade and a good investment. When it becomes the custom in an office for other stenographers to say, "Grace, may I borrow your grammar to look up something?" it is evident Grace is establishing herself both as a source of information and as an authority. She is putting herself another step ahead on the way to promotion. More often than employees realize, someone higher up discovers the person in the ranks who is depended upon for general information by other members of the office staff. I heard of one smart girl who was paid \$20 a month more than the other stenographers because her employers felt she bettered everybody's work.

And apart from the books on your desk, there are many other sources of reference which you will do well to learn how to use. The Chamber of Commerce is one of them. It will provide many local data by telephone, or it will be glad to furnish pamphlets upon request. You might call in person and find out just what is available there.

Information desks in any city library can answer an astonishing number of seemingly unanswerable questions and can refer you to books that will answer many more. And knowing how to use a library to look up references is a great help. The Civil Service Commission, the United States Department of Commerce, and the Department of Labor are invaluable sources of statistical material and are most accommodating. A request to the Superintendent of Documents at Washington, D.C., or the United States Government Printing Office in Washington will bring you a list of the pamphlets published by the Government. In their fields the Department of Agriculture and the Office of Education (Department of the Interior) have assembled much useful information, which they are glad to disseminate upon request. The *World Almanac*, published annually, can be bought at most stationery or book stores. Naturally, you will not fill your desk with unnecessary material of this sort, but you should know where to get the information you are likely to need in any post you take.

#### **BUSINESS ASKS FOR LEGIBLE HANDWRITING**

You may think that, because your training provides you with the skill to use machines of one sort or another, you will have little need for writing by hand when working in an office. That is a mistaken idea that has defeated many a hopeful young business aspirant. There will be many times when you will have to "take pen in hand" if only to make notations and to write figures. Legible handwriting will help avoid errors.

In endeavoring to discover how necessary handwriting is today, a survey was made in a representative group of Eastern firms employing several thousand clerks.<sup>1</sup> The employing firms were asked to state their views upon

1. The importance of handwriting in selecting employees
2. The importance of handwriting in performing the job

Without exception the business organizations stated that they

<sup>1</sup> JOHNSON, RAGNILD, *Is Penmanship Important in Securing and Performing Clerical Jobs?* Speech before Eastern Commercial Teachers Association, Boston, 1937.

preferred to have applicants fill out their application blanks in longhand. The assumption was that employment managers consider legibility and neatness of handwriting important when they are filling jobs where a certain amount of writing is required. Five companies reported that they sometimes rejected applicants at once because of poor handwriting, while the majority of the other firms admitted that, all other qualifications being equal, poor penmanship would tend to eliminate certain applicants in the final selection, if penmanship were a requirement of the position. Among the 5,000 clerical workers employed by these firms, it was reported that over 50 per cent were doing some work that called for legible handwriting.

Bookkeeping and accounting jobs headed the list because of the importance of easily read figures. As one organization insisted, you can guess at a word, but a figure must be read exactly the same by everyone. General clerical jobs were listed next in importance for handwriting, followed by such other jobs as payroll, order, inventory, and schedule clerks, sales correspondents, telephone operators, and secretaries. "Legibility" was the word most often used in stating business demands in handwriting.

A State Employment Office had to interview 100 applicants before it found ten persons who could write the small, neat hand an architectural client needed for drafting work. This same office told me it had frequent calls for people to take inventory and, here too, had difficulty in finding individuals who could write neatly and legibly.

#### PRINT HANDWRITING MAY SAVE THE DAY

In recent years, a new type of handwriting, which is actually printing, has been taught in the schools in some parts of the country. Young people who have had the benefit of this training find it very helpful to them in filling out application forms. And does the clear, simple printing make a hit! The personnel director in a large department store in the South showed me the blanks filled out by the last hundred or more applicants. About a dozen of them were neatly printed. The remainder were quite

illegible. "Perhaps I've overlooked some fine material," she said to me. "But I couldn't be bothered trying to decipher these messy-looking and unreadable applications. So I hired the people whose records I could read—those who used print handwriting."

Of course, it isn't always as simple as this. But there is little doubt that print handwriting is especially important in stores, restaurants, and other places where employees have to make out sales checks. Even though you think saleswork is of no interest to you, remember that department stores also employ many office workers. When you hand in your application to a personnel director who, because she hires salespeople, almost automatically looks for legibility, your qualifications for office work may never register if your application is too difficult to read.

### **BOOKKEEPING REQUIREMENTS**

So far we have dealt chiefly with what business requires of employees engaged in the correspondence side of office work, where words are the medium. But there is that other equally important phase, the recording or bookkeeping, where figures take the place of words. Here, fortunately perhaps, one's vocabulary is limited to the nine Arabic numerals and their zero, whose various combinations tell so many stories of profit and loss . . . and which for brevity put fiction to shame.

In this field business requires all-round bookkeeping efficiency; that is to say, a knowledge of the principles of accounting and the ability to apply them in solving bookkeeping problems, the ability to interpret bookkeeping records and to record properly all transactions of every kind according to the system in use. Business assumes, often wrongly, that while the student is acquiring this proficiency he is also gaining sufficient understanding of business itself to enable him to grasp the meaning of the different transactions. The student learns business theory in school, but only by experience in business can he acquire a real insight into the whys and wherefores.



In small businesses where the work is not highly specialized, as a beginner you may possibly be given an opportunity to keep the books and prepare profit-and-loss statements and balance sheets. However, if you know only the theory of keeping books and understand little of why books are kept and what the terms mean, you can easily make mistakes that may cost you your job. Sometimes these mistakes could have been avoided by the simple application of common sense and reasoning, but in most cases you will need frequent conferences with executives as you go along.

**Figures Should Have Meaning.** To get students to think of bookkeeping transactions as life situations instead of merely rules to be followed, an instructor in a collegiate school of business asked a class to open a hypothetical shop and keep its books for a month. Two girls chose a hosiery shop in a town they knew well. They found out what rent they would have to pay, what their advertising would cost, and learned from a hosiery manufacturer that the mark-up should be 39 per cent. When their beautifully typed final report was handed to the instructor, it showed that on an imaginary purchase of \$3,000 worth of hosiery they had made a net profit of \$2,100, in spite of the fact that they had paid out \$1,100 for expenses and still had \$2,000 of their original purchase in stock.

"You're money-makers, all right," laughed the instructor. He showed them that in order to make such a colossal profit they would have to sell stockings for several times the cost price, instead of at a mark-up of only 39 per cent. Yet neither of the girls was aware of the absurdity of their conclusions. The whole transaction was just so many figures to them, not life savings, worry, work, and hope deferred, as it would have been in real life.

**Time and the Bookkeeper.** As for the element of time in a bookkeeper's life, he differs greatly from the stenographer in this respect. While it is easy enough by clocking her speed to measure the amount of work a transcriber can turn out in a given time, there is as yet no similar standard for judging the productive

ability of bookkeepers. Yet the time element is an important factor because no employee can remain on the pay roll who runs up the overhead unduly because he is slow.

Time studies have been made of different bookkeeping operations in banks and other types of business in an attempt to arrive at standards for some phases of record keeping, but this research is still in its infancy. The bookkeeping ability tests prepared and given jointly by the United Business Education Association and the National Office Management Association have handled the time problem only in that they have estimated how much bookkeeping work, of the types included in the test, a trained student should be able to complete in a three-hour test. This group hopes in the future to do office research that will throw more light on the degree of productivity in bookkeeping to be expected of efficient employees.

#### **WHAT IS WANTED OF CLERICAL WORKERS**

This chapter is scarcely complete without some mention of what management looks for in clerical workers. Because there are so many different kinds of clerical positions, generalizations as to knowledge requirements are impossible. However, whether your clerical work is simple or highly complex, you can be sure you will be able to use practically everything you learned in school, with the exception of shorthand in some instances. You will need to be good at arithmetic, spelling, handwriting, and typing. Filing is also a prerequisite of many clerical positions.

But apart from the skills fundamental to positions that are largely clerical, there are personal qualifications that are equally fundamental, especially in routine jobs. Accuracy is absolutely essential. Common sense is a big help. To be able to perform dull tasks, often in endless repetition, requires infinite patience. Now, monotony of work is so boring to some types of persons that they lose all interest in what they are doing, fall into a habit of daydreaming, and soon make mistakes in their work. For this reason, the temperamental who dislike doing the same thing twice in the same way are not well suited to clerical jobs. Among

those who are most successful in these tasks are the individuals who take pride in turning out quality work and those who feel satisfaction in seeing their output run into quantity. There are many office positions that are best filled by men and women who like to see finished work piling up. But the need for accuracy puts on the brake with a warning, "Don't try to gain speed at the cost of quality!" It's the steady, patient worker who fits best into these jobs. Don't head toward clerical work unless you have these qualifications in abundance.

### **UNITED-NOMA BUSINESS ENTRANCE TESTS**

During the past several years a joint committee of the National Council for Business Education, now the United Business Education Association, and the National Office Management Association has carried on a research project which has culminated in the establishment of a permanent clerical ability testing program. The purpose of these tests is to provide an authoritative device for measuring the qualifications of commercial graduates and to provide employers of office help with a better means of appraising the qualifications of beginning applicants.

Once a year the United-Noma Business Entrance Tests are given for the following positions:

1. Stenographer
2. Machine transcriber
3. Typist
4. Bookkeeper
5. File clerk
6. Key-drive calculating-machine operator

Each student who takes one of these tests is required to take also the general information test and a test in fundamentals.

These tests are based on the actual duties that clerical workers perform in typical office positions. They are endurance tests as well as speed tests. For example, the stenographic student takes dictation for nearly an hour and then transcribes for two full hours. The bookkeeping test consists of a straight bookkeeping project that requires the student to go through the

complete accounting cycle in three hours. The machine transcription tests call for the transcription of one full dictating-machine record.

Such practical tests represent an excellent way of finding out whether you are meeting the standard requirements of business for certain office positions. Because they are prepared jointly by the National Office Management Association and the United Business Education Association, they acquaint you at first hand with what business actually expects you to know in order to be employable in the office occupation of your choice.

If you are interested in taking these United-Noma Business Entrance Tests, ask your teacher whether they are given in your community, and if so, when and where.

Now that you know something about possible positions open to you and what you will be expected to do as an employee, what about getting a job? Well, that is a job in itself. But like every other thing worth doing, there is a right way to go about it. And that is the next topic we shall discuss—how best to approach job hunting with a view to making that period of your first acquaintance with business as short as possible.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. What besides speed is required of a good typist?
2. What is meant by "excess capacity over the minimum requirement" in shorthand?
3. Does a stenographer's transcription speed increase proportionately with her dictation and typing speeds?
4. How important is transcription speed in holding one's job?
5. What effect does the length of the words dictated have upon your dictation speed?
6. Is what constitutes a day's work different in various kinds of businesses? If so, why?
7. What can you as an individual do to help yourself carry the day's load expected of you?
8. Do you think a typist should work to increase her speed after she gets a job?

9. Should a stenographer do the same? If so, how would she go about it? Does the same thing apply to a bookkeeper?

10. If your employer demanded speed would you risk accuracy to achieve it? Consider this from the standpoint of filing. Of making bookkeeping records.

11. Do you think it fair that a typist or a stenographer is expected to keep her typewriter cleaned and oiled?

12. In going to work for a company whose letter forms were unlike those taught in your school classes, would you call the attention of the office manager or the supervisor to the better forms?

13. Does the fact that a stenographer is overworked and lacks time to estimate how many lines her notes will occupy when transcribed, constitute an alibi for poorly set-up letters?

14. Do you believe that one just is or is not a "born speller"? Is it a waste of time for a poor speller to try to improve?

Would inability to spell be a handicap to a voice-machine operator? A file clerk? A PBX operator? A general clerk? A bookkeeper?

15. If you had difficulty with the spelling of certain words, to what extent could you make use of the dictionary to help hold your job?

16. Which needs a good vocabulary most, the stenographer who works for an educated man or the one who takes dictation from a man of limited education?

17. Are you expected to be familiar with its technical vocabulary before you start to work for a business that uses many words peculiar to that industry?

18. Is it a safe practice to correct a dictator's English? If you do, should you

a. Tell him what you have done?

b. Let him discover it for himself?

c. Take a chance on his not noticing the changes?

19. In order to advance into secretarial work is it absolutely essential that a stenographer be able to compose letters, with or without a word of instruction?

20. Does a stenographer's interest in source material related to her job indicate whether or not she is secretarial timber?

21. In what positions is legible handwriting considered important? What advantage can you see in print handwriting?

22. Name some of the requirements for holding a bookkeeping position.

23. Why is it important that bookkeeping transactions be thought through, instead of being recorded merely as so many entries made according to rules?

24. Is a bookkeeper's ability judged at all by the time it takes him to do his work? If not, why not?

25. State some of the qualifications for success in clerical occupations.

26. Why does a file clerk require a knowledge of alphabetizing? Why a good memory?

### **TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What are the advantages, if any, of knowing before you go to work what business will require of you in skills and abilities?

2. Discuss why speed is not the only important thing in taking dictation and in typing and transcribing. If you are very accurate, but slow, are you competent to hold a position as a stenographer?

3. Suppose you find yourself taking dictation from a man whose pace exceeds your dictation speed. Will you

a. Ask him to go more slowly?

b. Take down what you can, on the chance of being able to reconstruct the sentences from what you have recorded?

c. Become panicky and go through the motions of taking notes, hoping to remember what he said?

4. If you should find that you have taken more dictation than you can possibly get out before the hour when the letters must be ready for signature, will you

a. Decide which are the most important letters, and transcribe only those?

b. Tell the dictator the situation and ask him which letters *must* go out that day?

c. Say nothing and transcribe the letters in the order in which they were dictated, letting the balance remain in your book overnight?

5. In case you decide on the last-mentioned solution, what will you say if your employer notices that not all the letters he dictated have come to his desk to be signed?

6. Discuss the advantages to a stenographer of a good vocabulary and a knowledge of the English language when she takes dictation from an illiterate executive.

7. Helen Green went to work for a paint manufacturer. One day she took some dictation from an executive who kept talking about the "fillum." Although Helen did not recognize the word, she assumed it was a technical term and so she transcribed it as it sounded. When the dictator saw the letter he roared: "What's this? That's not the way to spell *fillum*." "How do you spell it?" Helen inquired. "Why, f-i-l-m, of course," he answered.

How could Helen have avoided this embarrassing situation? What would you do under similar circumstances?

8. Discuss whether shorthand and typewriting are English subjects rather than commercial subjects.

9. Whose responsibility is it to see that letters are properly arranged on the page?

10. What kinds of positions seem to require an interest in and a knowledge of words, grammar, and spelling? Give your reasons. Is this knowledge wasted if you are engaged in clerical work, or are dealing in figures?

11. If you were never very good in English and felt that your study of it to date had not equipped you to meet the demands for stenographic success stated in this text, would you decide to

- a. Look more seriously at the other gateways to business?
- b. Enter upon a more strenuous program of study to improve your English background?
- c. Laugh it off and take a chance?

12. Can you give any reasons for the seeming relation between a person's vocabulary and his success in the world, as shown by the Stevens Institute tests?

13. A marine insurance company complained that Mary Boyle, a clerk, lacked ordinary common sense. The instance cited was this: In figuring the insurance on a ship valued at \$20,000,000, Mary arrived at the cost of the policy as \$1,000,000 and made out the papers accordingly. Mary was sure her figuring was correct and could not understand how her chief saw at once that she was wrong, and said, "Take that back and make it right." The rate was 0.005 per cent, or 50 cents per \$100. What was wrong?

**Discuss whether Mary's employer was making an unfair demand upon her comprehension.**

### **PROJECTS**

1. What dictation speed is generally considered adequate to take care of any dictation you are likely to get in a beginning job? Check with your teachers and with your school placement bureau in order to find out the local requirements. Present this as a report to class, and be prepared to answer questions.

2. Check with someone you know who is doing stenographic work in an office and find out what is considered a day's work in her organization. Ascertain the number of letters (and their length) which your friend normally turns out; also, what other duties she performs, and the approximate amount of time devoted to each type of work. Prepare a brief report.

3. Although the requirements of no two offices will be just alike, it is important that you begin before graduation to check your attainments against business standards. Based on your present dictation, typing, and transcription speeds, estimate how many letters you would be able to get out in a seven-hour day. How should your time be apportioned among the three above-mentioned operations, in order to achieve the maximum output of which you are capable? Check with your teachers as to what per cent of your time should be allowed for interruptions, instructions, and such occurrences. Have your computation in shape to present orally to the class, from your notes.

4. Make a list of ten words you know you habitually misspell. State one or more ways in which you can correct this erroneous practice so that you will be sure of spelling them correctly in the future.

5. A college senior wrote the following letter to a vocational counselor who had spoken on the campus:

The girls all enjoyed your lecture a lot and say they feel it has effected their whole life. Your advice was certainly practical. We wish we had more like it, for we are not as keen about the advise our parents give us. Probably it is alright, too, but they treat us like children, which don't help us develope. We are looking foreward to having you with us again next year.

Check the misspelled words. Are they excusable? Are there any grammatical errors in the letter? If so, cite them.



Rewrite the letter so that it contains no errors in spelling or grammar.

6. Suppose an executive dictated the following to you, in a letter: "John Green should be the very person for this position because he is quote to the manner born unquote."

Unless you know the quotation you will not be sure whether the word is "manner" or "manor." From the meaning it might be either. Would you

- a. Take a chance and transcribe one word or the other?
- b. Ask your employer how to spell the word?
- c. Look up the quotation?

If you decided on the latter solution, how would you proceed to find out the name of the author and locate the quotation? To illustrate your method, look up and bring the correct quotation to class, along with a memo of your procedure.

7. If you were Miss White, in the text, and were asked to find out how distance is measured in San Salvador, how would you go about it? Get the information for class, and be prepared to report how and where you found it.

8. Choose one of the following businesses, and state how you would go about building up your sources of information if you went to work in a stenographic position there, with the prospect of working into a secretaryship:

- a. Manufacturing chemist, specializing in cosmetics
- b. Travel bureau, specializing in foreign tours
- c. Trust department for a bank

Without going into too much detail, indicate the kinds of books or periodicals you would need access to and where you would find them; also, other channels of information that might prove useful.

9. In addition to a knowledge of bookkeeping, state five traits or aptitudes a person who wishes to remain in bookkeeping should have. Be prepared to discuss these in class.

## CHAPTER V

### HOW TO GET INTERVIEWS

Now you are within sight of graduation. Your shorthand and typing are shaping up well. This is the time to ask yourself, "Do I know as much about the technique of getting a job as I do about office skills and practices?" Your answer will probably be "No." Doubtless up to now you've been too busy *getting ready for* business to have had much time to think about *getting into* business. But now you must begin to think about it. I am assuming, of course, that you're not one of the great horde of young people who expect the Great God Luck to take them gently by the hand and lead them directly to a swivel chair.

#### THE JOB OF GETTING A JOB

If job getting were only as simple as that! Who wouldn't like to make a few calls, have a few pleasant interviews in which one shone brilliantly without any preparation, and be graciously requested to go to work at once? What could be sweeter!

Some graduates are successful in finding work immediately, and for them the search is a joyous adventure. But they are the fortunate few. And perhaps not so fortunate at that! For when the first job comes too easily, they sometimes fail to appreciate their good fortune. Then it is the old story of "easy come, easy go" and progressing on the job isn't the serious matter it is to beginners who have worn out their dispositions and their shoe leather really working at getting jobs. For it is work, and don't let anyone tell you it isn't. The call for courage in those first days, or even weeks, after you leave school may be greater than anything life has previously demanded of you. But the reward of courage is great, and getting your job through hard work can

be a real adventure, too. I am going to tell you how to make it one.

### BEFORE YOU LEAVE SCHOOL

A few pages farther on you will find a list of things you can do to secure interviews. And the first of these will, logically enough, be: register and work with your school placement bureau. But, before we discuss that list of activities for you to start upon, now, even before you graduate, I want right here to say, "Talk with your school placement bureau or the teacher in charge of placement, before you turn a wheel." Ask their advice about job seeking. Tell them you plan to give them every cooperation and ask them just how they want you to work with them. This is very different from thinking, "Oh, they'll get me a job. I don't need to do anything about it." And it is also very different from the reverse attitude one often sees among the doubting Thomases who are so afraid their schools won't land them in jobs at once that they rush out to cover the town, without any plan or without having mastered the technique of making applications intelligently. More and more, business schools are taking an active interest in what their graduates do for themselves and in helping them to dovetail their efforts with those of the school. So, be smart, and make a confidant of the person heading your school's placement office.

### NO BULL'S-EYE WITHOUT TRUE AIM

Some applicants, however, go about the business of getting a job (and it *is* a business!) in a hit-or-miss fashion. They make a few haphazard calls on people they know, try a few firms they think they would like to work for, and then give up and go home discouraged, saying, "There just aren't any jobs!"

Other applicants mistakenly feel that they have been thorough and efficient if they have called on every business firm in a specific building or city street. But they've only been doing what salesmen call "ringing doorbells." They have entered offices totally unaware of employment conditions in each office,

totally unprepared to make a strong presentation of their abilities in relation to the firm's requirements, and they usually don't even know who it is they want to see. Here's what happens:

The scene is, let us say, the outer office of a concern that sells rope. You are conscientiously doing the building and have stepped off the elevator to confront a preoccupied young woman at a receptionist's desk.

"Good morning," she may say, in bored tones, or she may simply ignore you.

You edge up closer, looking around. There are doors leading into inner recesses of the office, doors leading to the men or women who may have a job for you. But between you and them is this girl to whom you are only another transient visitor.

You don't know how the office operates, what they require of their employees, or what is the name of the person who might see possibilities in you as an employee.

So you say vaguely and half-heartedly to the receptionist, "I don't suppose you need a stenographer, do you?" And she says, "No." Then it's all over. You can't run up and bang on any of the doors of those private offices. You can't stand in the foyer and yell, "Hey! I'm here!" You can't do anything but say, "Thank you," and get back on the elevator. Maybe you'll try the floor above and repeat the comedy. More probably you'll go home, feeling blue and discouraged. The world is against you. You've tried and you've failed. You're licked.

### PICK YOUR PROSPECTS

What nonsense! Only a miracle would get you a job that way. You actually haven't tried at all until you've made an intelligent plan and followed it meticulously to a successful conclusion. Good salesmen estimate their sales in proportion to the number of calls they make. The more people they can see in a day, the more goods they can sell. But even the best salesman has to plan where to find his best prospects. He doesn't offer electric appliances in a rural community that has no electric power, nor does he waste time trying to sell fur coats to people in the tropics.

He selects his prospects carefully and prepares a well-planned presentation of his products or services. Even the most eloquent and persuasive salesman, with a wealth of experience at his back, leaves little to chance. And you, in looking for a job, are your own salesman selling your own services. What you need is a definite sales campaign. *A plan! Take my word for it—one planned call is worth twenty hit-or-miss calls.*

### FIRST THINGS FIRST

What will be your first step? Obviously you can't get a job without seeing people who have positions to fill. What you have to do is figure out ways of getting appointments for interviews with the proper persons. There is a definite technique about the procedure. It's simple enough if you know the ropes. And no matter how green and inexperienced you may feel now, knowing the technique will help you approach the matter like a veteran.

Here are some of the first things to do:

1. Register and work closely with your school placement bureau.
2. Consult family, friends, and acquaintances for possible leads and connections.
3. Visit employment agencies.
4. Read the want ads.
5. List firms that employ beginners in your type of work.
6. Secure information about firms on your prospect list.

I have said *looking for a job is a business*. The sooner you make it your business, after you leave school, the sooner you will get on someone's pay roll. Plan to spend regular working hours at it; eight hours a day, five days a week until you land a job. Work just as hard for yourself as you will for a future employer. You'll be surprised how quickly with this approach you will become a poised, businesslike, employable person. Where shall you start? Right where you are.

### WORK CLOSELY WITH YOUR SCHOOL PLACEMENT BUREAU

Most private business schools and many commercial high schools maintain placement bureaus for the sole purpose of

placing their graduates in jobs. Although your school may not have enough calls from employers to provide positions for all students the very day they graduate, the schools generally are doing an excellent piece of placement work. The truth is that school employment bureaus are in a better position to place their graduates than are other employment agencies. This is because only employers who are willing to take the inexperienced will ask the schools for office help. Also, the schools know their students well and can therefore make a better selection of applicants for a position than can an interviewer in an employment agency who has barely met the graduate.

If your school has such a bureau, stick closer than a brother to it. Go in and talk with the placement officer a few weeks before you graduate. Go now. It's none too soon. Find out what kinds of jobs come into the school office, what salaries are paid, and what sorts of positions you can reasonably expect to be sent out on. Ask for advice and help, and promise full cooperation to your school employment office; go out on every interview it can arrange for you. If one of these interviews leads to a job, take it, for it is likely to be your best bet. Remember, no one will be quite so interested in placing you as the school from which you are graduated.

And do your part. Don't say to yourself: "Oh, I'm in no hurry. My school will get me a job. I'll just stay at home and wait until they do." It's surprising how many students take this attitude. Of course, if they don't care how long they wait, their schools doubtless will get them jobs. But that may take several months, since the number of jobs listed with the schools depends upon the needs of business. The students who cooperate most closely with their schools usually go to work first. When a school placement officer knows that a graduate is leaving no stone unturned on his own account, it is only natural that the school will applaud this attitude by doing its superlative best for such an up-and-coming young person.

Many good business schools say to their graduates: "We will do all we can to place you, but it may take a little time. Mean-

while, if you want immediate employment you may be able to get a job through an employment agency. We charge no fee, and they do. Some students feel it is better to pay the fee and go to work sooner. Do as you like." An important postgraduate school in California that maintains an excellent placement bureau and works closely with many employers goes so far as to multi-graph a list of the names and addresses of employment agencies in the locality. Other schools feel they will lose prestige if students seek work through outside agencies. Personally, I feel that neither students nor their parents should put the burden entirely on the schools. For the benefit of those students who wish to open up all possible channels of employment, I shall explain other types of employment agencies later in this chapter.

#### CONSULT FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND ACQUAINTANCES

You will be surprised to find how many worth-while leads are lying close at hand; in your own home, among friends, and acquaintances. I don't mean they have jobs in their pockets to hand out to you—just like that. This rarely happens except in books and the movies. But unless you have been so rash as to go to a strange community to seek a position, there are sure to be persons in your immediate circle who, because they go to business daily, can offer you invaluable advice and assistance.

In a California city of over 350,000 a survey of employed high-school graduates of a prewar class was made. Boys and girls from eight schools were checked by post card. They were asked to state through what sources they got their first permanent jobs. These are the interesting results:

	Per Cent
Tips from friends, relatives, acquaintances, etc.*.....	47
Entirely unaided personal solicitations (firm-to-firm canvass).....	27
Public schools.....	12
Employment agencies.....	10
Other sources.....	4
	<hr/> 100

\* One Year Later, *Special Bulletin* 16 and 17, published by Oakland Vocational Schools, Oakland, California, 1938.

Apparently this group close at hand is one of the best possible sources of jobs. So why not concentrate your efforts on these friendly prospects.

So why not start looking over your relatives and friends and making lists of them and their business connections. Begin with the family and then add the names of old friends, especially older people who may be in positions of prominence, or may be employers in their own right. Putting down such information in concrete form will open your eyes to many possibilities you might otherwise overlook. Next on the list put your acquaintances, schoolmates who are employed, friends of friends who may be able to help you, and possibly neighbors. List everyone who constitutes even a remote link with business and note the position and the name and address of the firm with which the person is connected. All such names are points of attack in your campaign for a job. You cannot tell which of them may prove important, so list them all!

**Right Kind of "Pull" Legitimate.** Self-reliant young people often object to using *pull* or seeking out their relatives and friends in getting work. They feel that, having had business training, it is up to them to secure their own jobs, singlehanded. Their spirit is admirable, but it seems to me that they are making job getting unnecessarily hard for themselves. There is no disgrace in using pull in its best sense. By "pull" I do not mean forcing anyone to give you a job you don't deserve, because of family or social connections. I do mean following up and consulting all your friends, relatives, and acquaintances whose interest and recommendation may help you to meet people who can employ you. If you are the kind of person who is backward and retiring in social contacts, it may be especially hard for you to go out and get a job entirely by yourself, but friendly assistance can smooth the way and help you present your qualifications more forcefully. Another point to consider is that many vacancies never reach an employment agency or the want ad columns. They are filled within the organization by friends of those already employed. It might as well be you. So make all the contacts you can, even



after you secure a job, for every lead is a possible path to a better position, a larger income in the future.

Start your lists now, before you leave school, and get this routine organization work out of the way before you start to look for work. Then, when you are through school, go over your lists, add new information, and plan your attack. You will be surprised to find what a help this preliminary spadework will be at this stage of your campaign. Starting out well organized will give you an advantage over your casual competitors.

**Why Not a Family Conference?** It may be an excellent idea to call a family conference not only to get suggestions, but to enlist the cooperation and understanding of your immediate relatives. Some parents, unfortunately, fail to realize how difficult it may be to get a job—especially the first one. When Mother and Father take the attitude that, because they have sacrificed to give Joe or Betty an education, it is up to him or her to find employment at once, they are not being very helpful. Occasionally, of course, there are “playboys” and frivolous girls who don’t care whether they work or not. But in my experience, I have found the majority of business-trained graduates more than anxious to be self-supporting. But you should show your parents that you are in earnest about getting a job and are starting about it in a businesslike manner, and so enlist their assistance.

The size of the family powwow depends upon the number of relatives you have and the extent to which you wish to enlist them. You may merely corner your brothers and sisters after dinner and ask them to talk the matter over with you and your parents. Or you may suggest to your mother that she ask your aunts, uncles, and cousins to dinner and then, in a most informal manner, tell them you are ready for a job and ask their active interest and assistance. The list you have begun may be explained, if you like, or you may jot down names that they suggest and add them to your lists later. You’ll be surprised at the good suggestions that will come from such a group, both at the time and later on, when each one gets to thinking how he or she can help. Names and ideas that would never have occurred

to you will spring forth, and if you are wise you will make notes of them all for future investigation.

**Follow Up Your Leads.** After your lists are well started, your next step is to get in touch with the persons whose names and addresses you have typed neatly or arranged on index cards. If possible, you should see these individuals in person; but when unavoidable you can use the telephone, and under special circumstances, which will be explained in a later chapter, you can write to them. Use your judgment in deciding upon the best approach to each person on the list. You are seeking information from them—asking a favor—so it is important to consider their convenience. Under no circumstances should you call anyone in an ordinary business position to the office telephone for such a personal reason as giving you job information. This applies to relatives as well as friends, for business makes no distinction in asking that personal phone calls be limited to emergencies. (This may seem a dire emergency to you, but it isn't to the other person, and you don't want to jeopardize his job.) If the person can be reached at home after hours, call then and ask for suggestions about positions likely to be available in his firm or elsewhere.

If any of your relatives or intimate family friends own their own businesses or are in important executive positions, it is not incorrect for you to telephone them at their offices, but it may be ill-advised. Interrupted at a busy moment, they may dismiss the matter without giving your problem the thought they would have given it at a more propitious time. So it is better, in calling them, simply to ask for an appointment.

For instance, you might phone Mr. Brown, a family friend whom you always call Uncle George, and say: "This is Mary Wells, Uncle George. I have just finished school and am starting to look for work. Would you be good enough to take time some day very soon to give me a little advice?" If he says he has no jobs, you might hasten to assure him that you are only seeking his advice because he has had business experience and is in a better position than you to know where there may be openings.

Since most people enjoy giving advice, such an appeal should either elicit suggestions right away, or at least gain for you the desired appointment and consideration of your problem.

An interested friend, who knows you and your background and potentialities, can do more for you by a mere word than a stranger, such as an employment agent. And, appealed to with courtesy and dignity, the average person is almost invariably helpful and kind.

Let us suppose that Mr. Brown (Uncle George) has agreed to see you and give you the advice you asked for. He might say, "Well, Mary, I can't realize you are grown up and ready to go to work. Sorry we haven't a thing here now. What can you do?" When you have told him, he may say, "I have an idea. I know John Williams over at the Central Bank. One of my best friends. Go see him, and tell him I sent you. They take on beginners every now and then." Mr. Brown may even be interested enough to call up his friend and make an appointment. Or he may give you a letter of introduction to Mr. Williams. In fact, your Uncle George, God bless him, may get so interested in giving you advice that he will provide a whole list of leads which you can follow up. And one of them may send you to the job that is waiting for you. The circles from a casual stone tossed into the pond of possibilities may grow very wide indeed.

Perhaps, instead of offering definite suggestions and actual names, Mr. Brown may dispense advice and plenty of it. Then it is wise to listen politely and *really* listen, for in this way you may get valuable tips that can come only from someone who is in the thick of business. Mr. Brown may say he understands that a certain insurance company is expanding; although he knows no one there, it might be well for you to go and see them. Or he may warn you against trying to get into the financial field just now, as he happens to know they are laying off employees right and left. He may end the conversation by saying, "Sorry I couldn't be more helpful, but I'll bear you in mind." Here is where your manners help you. Thank him with all sincerity and keep the door open for a return visit by saying, "If I haven't

found work, may I call you up in a few weeks to remind you of that promise?"

Your younger friends, although they may have been working only a few months themselves, can be a positive gold mine of suggestions and information. Ask them to go to lunch with you, "Dutch," and meet them promptly wherever they lunch, at whatever time they say. (Remember, they probably have to watch the clock.) They can give you the names of employment agencies they found useful, or they may even know of jobs. When you don't need a job you often know of several that are available. Come right out and ask these young friends or acquaintances for advice and you'll get it. Take their advice, for they have been through the mill recently themselves.

**Leads Provide Prospects.** When any of these sources of information provides what appear to be live job prospects, follow them up in your most efficient manner and try to secure an interview with the person in charge of employment. The way to do this is explained in the next chapter.

Your own lists of people you know may or may not prove productive in locating a job, but usually this is one of the best possible sources of tips. One young man I recall, John Graham, faithfully listed all the family friends and relatives and called on everybody they sent him to, only to decide it was all "the bunk," as he put it. "They just stall by sending me from one person to another," he complained. "I'm sick and tired of the run-around." So he concentrated on employment agencies until he could say truthfully that he was listed with every one in the city. Still no job.

Then out of a clear sky a distant relative, whom he had never met, heard through John's grandmother that he was looking for a job. Instantly the relative took an interest and asked John to come and see him. The result of that interview was that John went out with three letters of introduction to men this employer knew and who he felt might be able to employ John. At the first place he called they were looking for the very skill he had to sell, that of making store displays for the holidays, and he was

asked to report for work after lunch. John has changed his mind and now says that the personal recommendation and the letter of introduction are "swell" ways to get a job.

### VISIT EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

As soon as your lists are fairly complete and you have begun to try them out for what they will yield, you are ready to launch into the second part of your interview-getting campaign. This, of all times in your life, is no time to have all your eggs in one basket. In fact, you'll want all the baskets you can find so that one will always be in readiness for that hen that lays the golden egg. And one of your baskets will be the employment agency.

In large cities, experienced workers who, for one reason or another, are seeking work usually find the employment agency the best source of jobs. But beginners cannot depend too much upon this means of securing employment, since many agencies do not handle jobs for the inexperienced. When they do, they usually have a special department which they call by some such name as the Junior Division, since in placement parlance beginners are known as juniors.

The best way to find out which employment agencies are interested in placing beginners is to ask them. And the quickest way to do this is to make a list of commercial employment agencies from the classified section of the telephone directory, noting only those that specialize in office positions. Some of the agencies will not answer questions from applicants over the telephone, but enough of them will supply information on this point to give you a few places to begin making calls.

**State and Federal Employment Service.** There are several kinds of employment agencies other than your school placement bureau, which you as a prospective worker should know about. First on your list should be your State Employment Service, provided it maintains an office in your city. Practically throughout the United States, the Federal Government now offers a free employment agency service, in cooperation with the states. Joint offices are operated in both large and small cities, usually

under the name of the state. You will find them under such classifications as "California State Employment Service," or "Connecticut State Employment Service." In many localities these are the only employment offices available and so are doubly important for you to know about. Not only do these State employment offices function without charging a fee for placing applicants in jobs, but they have special departments and, in some cases, even special headquarters for junior placement. Where Junior Departments are maintained, there are vocational counselors as well as interviewers, since these Federal and State offices believe that high-school and even college graduates without specific training in skills often need counseling in planning and looking for their first jobs.

But there is another reason why you should call early on your State Employment Service. These offices handle the United States Social Security registration, and, before you can hold a job, you will have to obtain your individual number. This is an entirely separate transaction from registering for employment. So remember that you have two errands—both important—at the State Employment Office in your city. Some schools advise their students to obtain their Social Security numbers even before they graduate. You might ask your teachers what they recommend. In case there is no State Employment Service in your locality, your school will be able to tell you how to secure your number.

**Private or Commercial Agencies.** Next in importance are those employment agencies known as private or "commercial" agencies that pay their expenses out of the fees they charge applicants for securing positions for them. The services of these, as of all such agencies, are free to employers. There are many high-grade commercial agencies operating in cities throughout the United States. Visit some of them, provided they accept registration from beginners. Because their reputation and their success depend upon the kind of employees they send out, these agencies are for the most part careful to deal only with applicants and employers who are responsible. Furthermore, they keep

representatives in the field calling upon employers and soliciting their listings of positions, at least until desirable followings have been built up among employing firms. Such agencies can often put applicants in touch with employers to whom they would never secure direct access.

A reliable employment agency saves employers much time by selecting, from many applicants listed with it, a few whom it thinks best qualified to fill each existing vacancy. After they have worked together for years, an interviewer in an agency knows, almost as well as a firm's personnel director, what type of applicant has a fair chance of being accepted by certain employers. Knowing an employer's foibles and preferences and wishing to retain his business, the head of a commercial agency is very careful to send only those who she feels merit her recommendation.

But sometimes mistakes occur. A New York employment agency executive tells of sending a stenographer to one of its best clients, only to receive an irate telephone call from the employer. "What do you mean, sending us a girl with green shoes?" he demanded. The employment interviewer extended profuse apologies, explaining she certainly did know better, but that above the desk she had seen only the applicant's neat black and green costume. The too extreme footwear had entirely escaped her eagle eye.

When you call upon a commercial employment agency, if you are asked to register you may know that the interviewer thinks she can place you. Most agencies of this type will not waste words or application cards upon anyone whom they consider unemployable. When you register it is customary for you to sign a contract agreeing to pay a certain percentage of your first month's salary, if and when a position has been secured for you through the agency. These percentages vary in different localities and among different agencies. They range from 10 to 35 per cent of the first month's salary. In some states the fee charged is regulated by law. In New York State, for instance, the fee for office positions is the first week's salary for a permanent

position, or 10 per cent of the first ten weeks' salary for a temporary position. You need not shy away from this system. It is entirely legitimate. You should, however, beware if you are asked to pay for registering, or if an advance fee is demanded to put you on a "preferred" list. This procedure is not the accepted one. When you deal with a first-class agency you pay nothing until the job is obtained and you have received your first salary check. Usually, their fee is payable in several installments, if this is more convenient to the payee.

You can easily secure from your employed friends the names of agencies they have found reliable. When you have unearthed an agency entirely through your own efforts, you can check up on it through your school or indirectly through business firms. Most businesses are in the habit of securing employees through commercial agencies, and any of them would be willing to give you the names of the select few which have been supplying them with help over a period of years.

**Other Types of Agencies.** In some cities the typewriter companies maintain employment agencies. In the early days of the typewriter this was considered necessary because of the keen competition between the various manufacturers, who were anxious to place in offices only those workers who preferred their particular machines. Then placement services offered by the typewriter companies were free. But now, since almost everyone is familiar with all the best makes of typewriters, this kind of agency is not so prominent as it once was. Some typewriter manufacturers have discontinued this service; others make a flat charge for getting you a job; and still others do it for nothing. You might investigate this in your city.

Other non-fee-charging agencies are those maintained by the Y.W.C.A. and the Y.M.C.A., the Hebrew and the Catholic young people's organizations, and some of the fraternal orders and welfare agencies. Although many satisfactory positions have been secured through the kind offices of these groups, it sometimes happens that they do not have as good listings of positions as are to be found in the commercial agencies or the



**State Employment Services.** However, if you have any connection with any organizations such as these, which handle placement and are interested in assisting beginners, by all means call on them and get your name on their lists of applicants. You never can tell from what source that job of yours will materialize.

**Technique in Visiting Agencies.** The first information you want to obtain from any agencies upon whom you call is whether or not they register beginners. If not, you are wasting your time and may suffer the discouragement a group of beginners experienced recently in a large employment office. The waiting room was crowded, and one lone interviewer was trying to handle all the applicants. Evidently, she encountered a novice. This gave her a brilliant idea for clearing the room quickly and shortening her task. Rising from her desk, she said: "This agency does not place beginners. If there are any waiting, will they please leave." As she had surmised, thirty or more young women who had not known the agency did not register beginners left the room. They could have saved themselves considerable time had they ascertained earlier the policy of the agency in regard to beginners.

To get the best results from any type of employment agency you must keep in close touch with it. This means calling frequently at an agency that has registered you, if you are encouraged to do so. Certainly, every thirty days is none too often to make a routine call. Otherwise, your registration card is apt to be "closed out" because, not having heard from you, they assume you have secured employment. This is especially true with all the State Employment Services which, because they handle so many registrations, can deal only with live material.

All agency calls should be made in the morning, since it is then they usually receive listings by phone from employers who are short of workers. Some agencies like to have placeable applicants sit in the waiting rooms for an hour or so every morning, on the chance that positions for which they are fitted will be telephoned in. Ask advice on this point from any interviewer who seems interested in placing you. Different offices have different preferences and procedures in this matter. The main thing is

for you to keep in mind that no matter how desirable an applicant you seem to the agency, you may be forgotten in favor of someone who is on the spot at the moment. When there is no qualified person on hand, the agency begins to telephone registrants.

You cannot possibly be in more than one agency at once, and yet you wish to be registered with several. Consequently, you will not only have to spread your mornings but you will need to arrange some way to receive telephone calls. Your mother can be of inestimable service to you in this. She can take calls and either say where you are or promise to get a message to you promptly. By telephoning home at stated intervals, you can catch important emergency calls. If you are living in a club or boarding house, it is very important that you arrange for intelligent telephone service. Otherwise, you may miss a call that might be the "go" signal for the very job you are looking for.

Be sure that the telephone number where messages for you can be received is recorded accurately at the agency and keep any changes up to date. If an agency remembers you and takes sufficient interest in you to telephone you about a position, you're lucky. But if they don't get the number or, getting it, find you are out of town or have moved, your luck is against you. A notation is made on your registration card and you are taken out of the active file. This means your "goose is cooked" permanently as far as that agency is concerned. They are far too busy with the applicants they can reach to have time to indulge in detective work to find you.

### **READ THE WANT ADS**

This section will be helpful to you only if you live or seek work in a city whose newspapers carry classified advertisements headed, Men Wanted, Women Wanted. In most large cities and some smaller ones, employers use such advertisements to get in touch with applicants. In some cities employment agencies, too, use these columns to advertise positions they are trying to fill. If your newspapers carry such listings, I suggest that while you are following up personal leads and registering at

employment offices you also keep an eye on the Help Wanted columns. In fact, I urge you to acquire the habit of reading the want ads now, while you are in school. It is an excellent way in which to become familiar with the type of positions available. It will also give you a line on what salaries are paid and what qualifications are most frequently demanded. The Help Wanted columns of the classified advertising in your Sunday newspaper, in particular, may be considered a barometer of employment conditions in your community. When times are good there are flocks of advertisements of firms seeking help. In bad times most of the advertisements are run by persons seeking jobs.

**When Agencies Use Want Ads.** When the employment agencies advertise positions that have been listed with them, the agency's name and address is given and not that of the employer. If you are interested in the position advertised, your cue is to call at the agency at once and try to convince the interviewer you are someone she can recommend for the job. If you succeed, you, and usually one or two other applicants, will be sent for interviews at hours arranged by the agency. Most agencies prefer to send, or "refer," a maximum of two or three applicants to each request for help, since the employer relies upon the agency to do the sorting for him. Once in a while an employer will say to the agency, "The two stenographers you sent over seem all right. I suppose either of them would do. But I'd like to see others before I decide." When this happens you may find you are one of a considerable number of candidates who are being looked over. Often, too, an employer asks several agencies and maybe a school bureau or two to send possible employees. Naturally, each agency tries to send its best material. You may feel encouraged that you are sent to be interviewed under such circumstances. Nor need you be too discouraged if you aren't singled out for the job.

**Replying to Box Numbers.** When an employer advertises direct he usually gives a box number, which means that you will have to apply by letter to that number, stating your qualifications. Again I repeat: Do not apply unless you have the skills

and other qualities specified in the advertisement. Should your letter in answer to an employer's advertisement interest him or his personnel director, you will receive a reply asking you to call for an interview. Many young people tell me they answer all the advertisements and never get a reply. This is proof positive they are wasting their time, stationery, and postage answering advertisements for which they are not qualified. You can congratulate yourself when you do get an answer to your letter. It shows not only that you were selective in your choice of advertisements, but that your letter was outstanding. It would have to be! You may be sure it was one of six or eight chosen out of scores. It indicates, too, that you know how to write a good letter of application—an important part of your job-seeking equipment.

When a Help Wanted advertisement does not specify that experience is necessary and seems something a beginner could do, it is a good thing to follow through on it. You may get nothing out of it but experience, but at this stage of your campaign, experience in seeking work is what you need. Anything that helps you learn the ropes is all to the good.

**Picture This Scene.** Occasionally in advertising a position an employer will give his street address. He seldom does it more than once, for a dozen or more persons invading his place of business (as often happens in large cities) make him wish he had given a box number. Don't let a situation like this scare you out. It will be valuable experience for you if for nothing else than to have a good look at your competition and a lesson in how not to act! To get rid of the crowd, an employer tries to fill the position without interviewing everyone, and often he can. Sometimes the applicants are interviewed in the order of their arrival, but when the firm is deluged with applicants it is likely to delegate an employee to weed out the callers. Then, if your appearance is at all promising, you may be asked to stay for an interview. Many a young person has got to the august presence because he or she knew enough to sit quietly in a waiting room and to refrain from chewing gum or slouching.

This is perhaps a good place to tell you that you will be wasting your money to advertise in the classified Positions Wanted column at this time. Employers who want beginners don't look there for them. Experienced office workers, especially those who have something unique to offer, such as the ability to raise money for charitable organizations or to collect unpaid bills, sometimes secure good leads through using classified advertising.

#### LIST FIRMS THAT EMPLOY BEGINNERS

At the same time that you are listing personal leads, calling on employment agencies, and answering advertisements, you should begin to compile your own list of prospects. Willing as you may be to put in seven or eight hours a day on this job of getting a job, there may be days when you can't pound pavements all day. When you are tired from much footwork, take an hour out and work on your card index file of possible employers. But don't do much of this in the daytime. Spend an evening on it now and then. Possibilities are latent in the library, a classified telephone directory, or the city directory. It is not easy to compile such a list, but planning and carrying out this type of research are good practice. You'll find it much easier than many chores you will have to do when you are actually working. This task calls for initiative and intelligent planning, both very important factors for success in your future work.

Get yourself a package of library cards, an alphabetical index, and a small box into which they fit. Most five- and ten-cent stores have them. Carry a few of your cards in your purse or pocket, and jot down leads you get during the day. Or, if you prefer, take notes on a sheet of paper and transfer the names to cards when you get home. As your card index grows, you will find it helpful in supplying cards that you can take with you when you leave home in the morning—for these cards will carry the names of firms you plan to call on during the day.

With an entire business community as a possible market for your services, you should become selective at once. Otherwise, you will be "ringing doorbells." The first, and alas! a very

great, limiting factor is that your list should consist of businesses that are willing to employ beginners. You wish to be a stenographer, but it would be foolish to list all the firms that employ stenographers. You would have a list as long as the classified section of the telephone book!

Here's a tip! Insurance companies throughout the country have a policy of employing beginners and training them. Therefore, insurance firms go on your cards, as excellent prospects on which to call. You can look up all the insurance firms in your city and make out a card for each. List the name of the firm, its address, the kind of insurance it handles (if possible), the name of the personnel director (if obtainable), and the type of position for which you plan to apply. Here is how a job prospect card would read after you had filled it out:

**FIRM NAME:** Trustworthy Insurance Company

**ADDRESS:** 79 Mainway Street

**KIND OF BUSINESS:** Life, fire and accident

**PERSON HANDLING EMPLOYMENT:** Miss Grace Lynn, Personnel Director

**POSITION APPLIED FOR:** Clerical . . . . . typing

**REMARKS:** Policy to employ only academic high-school graduates with post-graduate business training to start as typists or general clerks. Next step up, dictating-machine operators. Employ few stenographers and no secretaries. Good training, but salaries never high

**RESULT OF CALL:** No opening at present. Call in 30 days

Your last item, and perhaps the "remarks," would be added after you call, of course. Put this card in a "tickler" file at the date noted, and forget it until that day. When it bobs up then, you can decide whether or not to follow up your first call. Much water will have gone under the bridge during that month. You may even have a job, in which case you won't be even consulting your file, praise be!

**Other Likely Leads.** Banks are often good leads for initial jobs. You can easily ascertain whether those in your locality employ beginners, and if so, in what capacity. If you find that they do, make cards for them similar to the sample insurance card. Fill in all the information you can, and then make some calls.

Ingenious beginners will find other ways of getting leads. Margery Gray, for instance, got a job by visiting office buildings and asking the rental offices to give her the names of firms that were about to move in. Not all building superintendents were cooperative, but she got enough leads to keep her busy for days. Margery finally found among these names a firm that would need extra help in its new quarters. The office manager was impressed by Margery's initiative and took her on. It is in such original ways that many positions are found. Sometimes, by watching the news items in the paper each day, it is possible to get information about projected business expansion. Building material companies usually subscribe to a service which gives them advance information of this sort. If you know someone in that line of work, you may be able to get hold of these daily tips.

Many manufacturing firms are willing to use beginners for general clerical work, promoting them to other positions after they make good. In a small city such a list would not be difficult to compile, but in a big city the task would be formidable. Suppose you begin to work on manufacturers, making it your business, for a few days, to try to get data about them. Where will you find it? The Chamber of Commerce can often give you information, not only about its manufacturing members, but about other companies that are expanding.

When you go to a Chamber of Commerce it is well to have some definite questions in mind. Ask for the information clerk and say to her something like this: "Can you tell me whether manufacturers in any particular line are taking on office help just now? I'm looking for a beginning position as general clerk or typist. I'd appreciate any information you can give me." If the answer to your question is a flat, "No," be prepared to ask other questions. "Are there any new businesses coming to town?" "Have you any information about expansions that might mean more office jobs?" Especially in a smaller city you can often get a line on a newcomer in this way. Sometimes, it leads directly to a job possibility.

It would, of course, be more than foolish to try to list all the manufacturers in your community. You don't expect to be job hunting the rest of your life! You will have to give considerable thought, therefore, to the names that go into your manufacturing file. Your first limitation is a poser: "Does this firm employ beginners?" It is not always easy to get this information unless, through your personal connections, you can ask someone who knows. But here's another way. Suppose an employment agency has sent you to be interviewed by the office manager of a shoe manufacturer. Although you did not get this job, you know they do hire beginning office workers. If this is true of one shoe company, the chances are it would also be true of others in the same industry. So you experiment. You list a few of the other shoe firms and call on them. Another way of limiting your manufacturers' list is by making cards for only those lines of business that interest you most—aviation, tool and die making, wholesale millinery, or what not.

In a small city information travels quickly. Therefore, it is likely that some of your acquaintances may be able to tell you of manufacturers whose business requires beginners who can do a number of things. Again there are small cities where most of the manufacturing is done in one line. Akron, Ohio, is a good example. It is the nation's "rubber" city. If you live in such a city, you learn as you go through school a great deal about your community's specialty. Perhaps some of the members of your family work in this business. You, too, confidently expect to find employment in one of the big manufacturing plants. In such a case you will have advance information as to how to go about applying for work, and early in your job-seeking campaign you will call on the firm of your preference.

Frankly, these general lists may never bring such results as do your personal lists or your agency contacts. But they are one more channel through which to work, and you need to open them all, for your lists must grow all the time. Each day you will remove the names of dead prospects on whom you have



called with no results, and unless you add new names you will soon be without prospects.

### KEEP YOUR CAREER PLAN IN MIND

Perhaps you are wondering why I have not said something about going after the kind of job you want most. You remember we said a great deal about that in our chapter on planning your business life. But that plan of yours, important as it is, is a long-range plan. What you need first is any kind of job, a toe hold in business that will take you out of the inexperienced class. While on your first job you can look around, gauge your abilities, tighten your belt, and make your real start toward your career.

However, after you have made some progress in organizing and utilizing your general list, you can, if you like, add a few names from the line of business of which you hope eventually to become a part. You will be wise not to tackle any of these companies until you have had a little experience in interviews. It would be too bad to lose out on a job in your chosen field because you had been too green to conduct your first interview properly.

### SECURE INFORMATION ABOUT FIRMS

Getting information about a firm to which you are about to apply for a position is very important. In preparing your own prospect lists in advance, you can sometimes look up a firm in a business directory and learn what product it makes. Reading a company's advertising in magazines or trade papers in the library will often give you valuable facts about the business you propose to invade. However, you cannot afford to spend too much time getting such information about names on a self-compiled list, because you may find you are not acquiring actual prospects, but are merely listing organizations for which you would like to work.

When you have an appointment for an interview with the personnel director or employment manager of a firm, it becomes

doubly important for you to learn all you can about the prospective employer. Such information will help you to ask sensible and proper questions in the interview. If you know a day or even a few hours in advance that you have such an appointment, it is better to stop your work on other prospects and concentrate on finding out all you can about the firm that is to interview you. Go to the library, look up the company in business directories, and study its advertising, as I have suggested before. If you have any leads through friends or acquaintances who know the organization or any of its employees, get in touch with them and try to find out whether the firm is progressive, whether national or local in its setup, what salaries it pays, whether it is making money, and any other facts you can discover, which you are entitled to know.

When you are sent direct from an employment agency, as often happens, you have no time to do any investigating. You are then justified in asking the person interviewing you in the agency to tell you something about the business organization you are about to call upon. Usually you will learn what products the firm makes, whether it is a branch or the head office, and whether the person interviewing you will want to do all the talking or will want you to take the lead. Any facts you can get before you take your place in the anteroom of the employer, waiting your turn, will help you, provided that you use them skillfully.

#### PLAN YOUR CALLS

After you have worked faithfully at these six things I've suggested, you should have quite a boxful of prospect cards. You will have made a few calls and had a few interviews, but only now are you ready to tackle this business of job hunting in earnest. Now you should begin to use your cards systematically on calls. There is more or less a standard procedure to follow. Again you can take a tip from the outside salesman and plan each day's work in advance. It is only the veriest amateur in selling who scatters his efforts, jumping all over the town and losing time and momentum.

The experienced and successful salesman sorts his cards the night before, so as to be all ready for an early start the next day. He uses a map and a directory if need be, and routes his calls in one part of the city on a given day. As he sorts he may plan several days' work, combining cards according to their locations. You, too, should sort your prospects by street addresses and arrange your prospect cards in order of location. Even if you use a car, this is a much simpler and more economical method.

So let us assume that you know where you're going, and you're on your way. But what are you going to say? I hope you've been thinking about that, too.

### QUESTIONS

1. Do you know whether your school maintains a placement bureau? If not, find out.

2. If it does, what is the advantage to you of working closely with this bureau?

3. Are you willing to make *the job of getting a job* your main business, as soon as you graduate—working at it eight hours a day?

4. Why should relatives, friends, and acquaintances be advised of your job-getting activities?

5. Should you use "pull" when you start looking for work?

6. Why are your school friends who are now employed a good source of leads?

7. Is it considered all right to telephone business people you know at their offices to ask whether they can tell you of any job openings?

8. Is it legitimate to ask business executives whom you don't know to give you advice?

9. What other placement or employment agencies, besides those operated by schools, are recommended as supplementary means of obtaining interviews?

10. Which charge fees for securing positions for applicants? Which perform this service free of charge?

11. Why does your text suggest that you call first upon your State Employment Service?

12. How do employment agencies find the jobs they dispense?

13. If a commercial agency asked you to pay a registration fee, what would this tell you about the agency?

14. Do all employment agencies place beginners? What is the term used in agencies to designate beginners?

15. Is it necessary to call at an employment agency more than once? Should an agency be expected to get you a job after the first interview?

16. Do employment agencies send out on interviews everyone who applies to them? If not, why not? On what basis do they make their selections? About how many applicants do they send for each job? Why?

17. What is the value to you of beginning to read the Help Wanted columns in your daily paper before you leave school, since you are not yet ready to answer advertisements?

18. Why do so many persons who answer Help Wanted advertisements get no replies?

19. Name some types of business that make it a general policy to employ beginners.

20. What should you gain from your first job, in addition to a salary?

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is it a good idea to sit down and wait for your school to find you a job? If you do so, does it show that you have great confidence in your school placement bureau or that you lack self-confidence?

2. Why should your first step be to secure interviews? With whom do you desire interviews? Who can get them for you, or must you arrange for them yourself?

3. Comment upon what is wrong with the approach, "You don't need a stenographer. do you?"

4. Discuss various ways of making contacts with business people whose advice would be helpful to you. Are important people willing to take time to talk with students just out of school?

5. If it is true that the more calls a salesman makes the more goods he sells, why isn't "ringing doorbells" an excellent means of locating a job?

6. Do you think the statement in this chapter, "Getting a job through hard work can be an adventure," contains a contradiction? Discuss the adventure possibilities of hard work.

7. Explain what the following expressions mean as used in this chapter: *leads*, *prospects*, *calling cold*, *ringing doorbells*, *scattering*, *tickler file*, *closed out*, *junior*, *pull*, *family powwow*.

8. Are you asking a favor when you look for a job?
9. Why is it true that "one planned call is worth twenty hit-or-miss calls"?
10. Explain the difference between legitimate and illegitimate pull.
11. If you believe that a letter of introduction would make an interview easier for you, suggest ways of getting such letters. How do you think a telephone call to an employer from a mutual friend would compare with a letter of introduction that you would present in person?
12. Why is it important that whenever possible you find out all you can about an employing firm, in advance of your interview? What sort of information would you try to get? Where would you go for it?
13. Suppose an employment agency has given you a card to a business firm setting a time for you to be interviewed for a stenographic position. You have heard on the outside that this concern is in a shaky financial position. Would you decide not to call for the interview? If you think it advisable to find out more about this firm before you make such a decision, what type of data would you seek? Where would you go for this information?

### PROJECTS

This chapter contains a plan for lining up interviews and suggests that some of the steps can be taken before you leave school. Because anything you can do in this direction now will be just that much time and labor saved later, the first five exercises and the last should be undertaken by all the class, as an actual project in self-help.

1. Make a list of your relatives, friends, and acquaintances who might be helpful in supplying leads that would help you locate actual job prospects.

2. Go to the State Employment Service offices in your city and get your Social Security number. Then you will have it ready when you go to work. Report back to the class anything you learn when on this errand.

3. Make a list of local employment agencies, dividing them into the fee-charging and the non-fee-charging. Take your original list from the telephone directory. Then ask employed friends or acquaintances or business people who employ office workers for information about these agencies. Find out and note about each:

- a. Whether the agency places beginners
- b. What fee, if any, is charged
- c. What types of positions the agency specializes in

- d.* Whether it has a desirable employer clientele
- e.* Whether it has a high-class employee clientele
- f.* What its standing is in the community

Based on this information, revise your list, rating the agencies as A, B, and C, for your future guidance.

4. Read the want ads in last Sunday's newspaper and bring to class one or two advertisements you feel you would be qualified to answer as soon as you had finished school. Be prepared to give reasons for this belief.

5. Make a list of firms you think you would like to work for. Have a reason for putting each name on your list.

6. Carry out the analogy between yourself and a salesman by writing out brief but well-considered answers to the following questions:

- a.* What is your product?
- b.* Who wants to buy it?
- c.* What is your competition?
- d.* How can you get your product before potential buyers?
- e.* What do you need to know about your product in order to present it properly to buyers?

7. Read the Help Wanted advertisements in last Sunday's newspaper and report to class the salaries offered for all of the following positions that may be advertised:

- a.* Stenographer
- b.* Secretary
- c.* Typist
- d.* Bookkeeper
- e.* File clerk
- f.* Voice-machine operator
- g.* Clerical worker (list type of work)
- h.* PBX operator

If there are discrepancies in the salaries offered for the same type of position, examine the requirements carefully and see whether you can find the reasons.

8. Choose a manufacturing company in your community and see what information you can get about it. Here are suggested questions to which your research should supply the answers:

- a.* Where are the company's factories?
- b.* Where are its main offices?

c. Who are its principal customers? (These might be chain stores or independent stores, or both, or it might sell direct to the consumer.)

d. What territory does the local plant serve?

e. How many employes work in this plant? How many of them are in the offices?

f. What product or products does this company manufacture?

g. What is the retail outlet? (department, grocery, drug, or hardware stores, etc.)

h. What is the retail price of its leading products?

i. Is the business of the company increasing or decreasing? (The answer to this question, if you can obtain it, may indicate whether there will be job openings available.)

You can get the answers to these and other questions from the company's sales literature, from financial pages in your daily paper, from newspaper and magazine advertisements, and from catalogs. If the organization you are investigating has a showroom, by all means visit it and get information from the salesman in attendance. Talk to employees, if possible, and find out what they think of the firm, its policies, and products.

Put all this information into a report for class, and list the sources of your findings.

NOTE: You will not ordinarily have time while job hunting to make such a thorough research. But this project will show you how much information it is possible to get together and will indicate its value to you.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **REHEARSE YOUR PART IN THE INTERVIEW**

With any luck, your perseverance in seeking appointments will bring you some interviews early in your job-getting campaign. Your first interviews are likely to come through your school, so you must be ready for them from the day you graduate. Of what value the elaborate plan for securing interviews if, when you get them, you don't know how to handle yourself? You must know how to make a good impression as well as be capable of filling the job. This means that you must, as soon as possible, become so adept in interviewing technique that you can take each such experience in your stride.

Statistics reveal that the average person goes through a season of looking for work only seven times in his entire life. At each of these periods, ability in obtaining interviews and in conducting yourself well during even the most difficult one is of tremendous importance. For a brief space of time this is the most vital thing in your life, so you must be good at it. The test of how good you are is how quickly you lose that job of working for yourself and attach yourself to an honest-to-goodness employer who will pay you for your time and services.

#### **THERE'S A TECHNIQUE ABOUT BEING INTERVIEWED**

In your case, the art of applying for a job need not remain the mystery it is to many uninformed beginners. You can learn a great deal about interviewing technique before you leave school. At least you can learn enough of the theory behind it to handle yourself adequately in your first interviews. Knowledge of what to do and say will help you get rid of nervousness and fear, and putting the technique learned in school into actual practice



will increase your experience and education in this important branch of knowledge. As your systematic campaign of applications, appointments, and interviews progresses, your poise and assurance will increase steadily. Soon you will be able to meet new people with ease and learn to shift mental gears quickly in estimating the most effective approach to each new type of executive.

But again, you must *plan!* It is just as important to figure out in advance what you are going to say in an employment interview as it is to arrange the appointment. Sometimes luck will smooth the way for you, but you cannot always count on luck. You will find hard common sense more consistently productive of satisfactory results, especially when the times are out of joint. Unless you believe in miracles, don't take chances. There is no substitute for well-thought-out plans to get you a job or an advancement in life. Going into an interview and saying anything that comes into your head is just as futile as "ringing doorbells."

### AS A SALESMAN, KNOW YOUR PRODUCT

I have suggested that you organize your interview-getting campaign as though you were a salesman locating prospects to whom he might sell his wares. Now go a step further and approach the problem of selling your services as a skilled salesman would go about selling his product. A good salesman learns everything there is to know about the article he is selling. No firm would send him out until he did. Those young men who go from door to door, asking permission to demonstrate a vacuum cleaner, for example, have spent at least a week in the manufacturer's salesrooms learning all about the product and how to sell it. They have rehearsed their sales talk under the direction of experts, and they have tried it out on their relatives and friends before they are permitted to talk to actual prospects. Without all this careful preparation they could not be expected to present the cleaner in its best light, or to answer questions intelligently.

When you set out to sell your services through interviews with prospective employers, you, too, must know what you have to offer. Obviously, what you are selling is your ability to use certain skills learned in school and needed in business offices. Your appearance and your personality will speak for (or against) you from the beginning of the conversation. If these factors are favorable they will go far in convincing the employer that you are the kind of person he would like to employ. But, important as such things are, you cannot depend entirely upon externals; without definite skills to offer you would not be taking part in this business tête-à-tête.

### BE READY WITH THE ANSWERS

Every worth-while interview is divided into two parts. First come the questions such as, "What can you do?" These deal largely with the skills you have learned. Untrained applicants, even with college degrees, do not last long in an interview unless somewhere along the line they have picked up something that will be useful in business. They pass out of the picture at once because they cannot offer technical proficiency.

Strange as it may seem, in many applicants the ability to answer specific questions about specific skills is lacking. Vagueness or nonchalance characterizes the replies of more than half the experienced workers who visit employment agencies looking for work. The words *rapid* or *fair* will be written after the questions on application blanks that say: "What is your dictation speed?" "What is your transcription speed?" "How rapidly can you type?" I have sometimes tried to get more definite information by asking an applicant, "How is your typing?" only to have him or her come back with, "Oh, it's all right." Another frequent answer is: "I haven't taken a test lately, but don't worry. I've always held good jobs, so I'd have to be O.K." Such self-satisfaction often belies the fact. A test right then in dictation will show all too often that only one out of three stenographers with one to six years' experience can transcribe a mailable letter. Beginners, fresh from school tests,

have an advantage here. They know definitely what their dictation, transcription, and typing speeds are.

Although you must expect and be prepared to answer these and similar questions about speed, don't get the idea that speed is the only thing business requires. Accuracy and general clerical competency are equally important today. Such skills cannot be clocked or estimated easily by questions and answers. Your general efficiency will be judged by indirect means.

### PRACTICE INTERVIEWS

Suppose you are applying for a combination position as stenographer-bookkeeper in a small business. You will be questioned about your shorthand ability and about your knowledge of keeping books. In preparing yourself for such an interview, think over what you will say to show that you know the principles of accounting and can apply them to solving ordinary bookkeeping problems. Try to gain and keep in mind the point of view of the employer. Let us visualize the scene. You have stated what you can do with shorthand. Then—

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever kept books?

YOU: I haven't kept books for a business firm, but I am sure I can do the work because I learned in school how to keep a simple set of books. I understand records and can record all kinds of transactions according to whatever system your firm uses.

INTERVIEWER: Can you operate an adding machine?

YOU: Yes. (or No.)

INTERVIEWER: What kind of calculating machines have you used?  
Which of the four comptometer operations can you do?

Answer truthfully. There is no use bluffing when it comes to figures. Why not offer to show what you can do by taking a practical test?

In any interview you should be prepared, also, to answer a general question about your skills, such as, "What position are you qualified to fill?" Or you may meet, in your rounds, a personnel director who has several positions to fill and who is

sounding you out. This is no time to say, "I want to be a secretary or nothing." (It's likely sometimes to be nothing, if you are as choosy as that!) Neither would it be wise only to stress stenography leading to secretarial work. State first the thing you want most to do and think you can do best, but don't go above stenography in seeking your first position. Here is how the interview might run:

EMPLOYER: What can you do?

YOU: I can take dictation, do bookkeeping, typing, general clerical work, and filing.

EMPLOYER: Ever operate a switchboard?

YOU: Oh yes, I forgot that.

If you know how to operate an adding machine, an addressograph, or a multigraphing machine, by all means say so. Don't wait for a busy businessman to drag the information out of you piecemeal. But don't go into details, either. It is enough for you to enumerate your skills. Only the untrained say, "I'm willing to do *anything*." That is a confession they know how to do nothing. The only statement worse than this is the frequently heard, "I can do *everything*."

#### ACT ONE ENDS: ACT TWO BEGINS

Anticipating such questions and planning your answers is simple, for here you are dealing with tangible things. You either know how to keep a set of books or you don't. You either know how to run a mimeographing machine or you don't. The employer wants to know how skilled you are on the technical side, and you should be able to tell him. But he will want to know other things about you and will ask other questions for which you also need to be prepared. When you have answered all the questions about what you can do, the first, and most definite, part of the interview is over. Henceforth, it's open season for everybody.

When giving a series of talks on job getting to the seniors of a private business school I ended a lecture with the statement,

"Next week I shall tell you what kind of questions you will be asked." Immediately an eager young woman rushed up to me and said: "I can't wait until next week. I've an appointment with an insurance company tomorrow. Just what questions will they ask me?"

One would have to be clairvoyant to know exactly what questions will be asked beyond those related to your skills. But I am passing on to you interviewing knowledge gained through ten years as an employer, experience in an employment agency and, during the war, the interviewing and hiring of thousands of office workers. This information should help you anticipate the trend of the questioning. If you are ready for as many questions as you can foresee, you will be sufficiently poised and self-confident to answer the rest as they are presented.

#### PERSONAL QUESTIONS NEXT

Applicants who have passed through the technical interrogation part of an interview with flying colors sometimes become confused and embarrassed when more personal questions are asked. If you will remember that whoever interviews you is not trying to be unduly personal, but is merely trying to estimate what sort of person you are, you will not resent the questioning. Here are some of the things most likely to be asked, to which you should be able to reply briefly and truthfully:

1. What do you do in your leisure time?
  2. What were your extracurricular activities in high school?
- In college?
3. What subjects did you like best in school? Least?
  4. What business experience have you had?
  5. What makes you think you can fill this position?
  6. Do you live at home or board?
  7. Have you lost much time in the past year because of ill health?
  8. Why do you think you want to work for us?
  9. If you have worked before, why did you leave your last position?

**WHAT KIND OF PERSON ARE YOU?**

The first question should not be construed by young women applicants as an attempt on the part of a man to date them. Both the first and the second questions are intended to get you to talk naturally about your outside interests so that the employer can size you up. He may want to know something about your home and family background, which your diction will help him to determine. Knowing what you like to do will give him an idea of your personality and intelligence. If he asks this question, he hopes you will open up and tell him what your hobbies are, whether you are interested in athletics actively or as a spectator, whether you like to read or go to the movies, work in the garden, or collect stamps.

You will impress the interviewer more favorably if you show him that you are a human being than if you try to pose as a paragon who never reads anything lighter than Shakespeare and who wouldn't be so frivolous as to adore dancing. Such "guff" would suggest immediately that you were staging an act and would give rise to a doubt of the veracity of some of your claims about your business skills. Answer the questions honestly and in an interesting manner, but be brief and to the point. To launch into a discussion of your favorite movie star, tell the plot of the picture you saw last night, or talk about where you and your "boy friend" (or girl friend) go dancing, would hardly be suitable to the occasion or win approval of your good taste and business sense.

One personnel director I know was interested when a stenographic applicant said that her hobby was collecting photographs of rooms. Queried about this unusual turn of the collecting craze, the girl explained that she had scrapbooks into which she put her own snapshots of interiors, magazine clippings or anything else she could get of the type of rooms she liked to study. The personnel director did not care whether this interest indicated a frustrated ability for interior decorating or betrayed a not-too-latent domestic urge. She merely applauded the girl's

interest in an original hobby and used it as a means of getting acquainted with her.

The questions, "What subjects did you like best in school?" and "What subjects did you like least?" are rather obvious in purpose. They are mildly disguised attempts to get a general picture of your aptitudes. Business feels that applicants who admit they despise mathematics, for example, would be unfit for positions dealing with figures, whereas those who like English, spelling, and languages would probably make good stenographers and might possibly be promising secretarial material. Although employers do not go very far into the matter of aptitudes, anyone interviewing you would realize that you would not be likely to succeed if your daily work dealt with a subject you disliked.

### THAT MOST DREADED QUESTION

The question, "What experience have you had?" can take the heart out of the cockiest beginner and bring on a case of "jitters" approaching panic. Actually, this question is not so difficult to answer as you might suppose. You should be applying only to a firm willing to take beginners; hence, the employer knows you cannot have had much, if any, experience. The question may be purely routine, or he may want to know whether you have worked while going to school. This is another instance where bluffing is useless, for if you say you have held a paying position you will have to give details that can be easily verified. And firms do frequently check up on references.

A recent graduate from a business school consulted me about arranging with a relative to say she had worked a year in his office. "You'd only make your situation worse," I told her. "You couldn't hide your inexperience, and your employer would soon wonder how you could be so dumb if you'd held a job that long."

There is experience and experience. You may have had more than you realize. If you have done any kind of store, office, or camp work during your vacations, by all means mention it. If

you have worked after school or on Saturdays at anything for which you were paid, that, too, is good for your record. And if you have worked in the business office of your high school while in school, mention this as experience. Any of these will be helpful to you in the eyes of the man or woman who dispenses jobs.

### STATE YOUR CASE CONSTRUCTIVELY

But if you have had no working experience of any sort you will have to say so. This can be done negatively, or constructively. Here you are, with a job dangling before your eyes, and that hated question has come up to damage your chances. Will you say hesitantly, with a droop in your voice: "I'm sorry, but I haven't worked before. If experience is required I guess I'm out." (And you are!) Or will you take the situation by the horns, look it pleasantly in the eye, and say, confidently, something like this: "I've just finished business school, Mr. Brown (mentioning the name of the school and the course you took), and I'm out to get my first experience now. While I can't say I've been paid for working *yet*, I don't feel totally inexperienced because we studied bookkeeping (or whatever subject is under discussion) in school, much as we would have to use it in a business position. I feel I can do the work to your satisfaction, Mr. Brown, partly because I've just come through a stiff course in accounting (or stenography), and also because I'm not afraid of hard work. I'd like to learn to do the job the way you want it done, and I naturally expect to begin at the bottom and work up." This last sentence is music to his ears.

Probably you wouldn't have the time or the nerve to make such a long speech. There would be interruptions from the employer and some give and take. But if you will handle that disturbing question of experience in some such constructive way, you won't find it an insurmountable barrier. What you have done is to minimize your lack of experience and bring out certain advantages possessed by the beginner. Also, you have stated something about yourself that employers like to hear: your



willingness to learn how the firm wants its work done and your desire to work up from the bottom. This is a refreshing contrast to overconfident beginners whose manner suggests that they expect to start near the top and take over the management of the firm within six months. A fair-minded employer realizes that any inexperienced person requires a little time to adjust himself.

### THINK YOUR ANSWERS THROUGH

The question, "What makes you think you can fill this position?" should be answered after a moment's thought. You have no experience in a similar job to back you up, so you must rely upon your recent training, your interest in the work itself, and your determination to make good. Speak frankly and positively, without boasting. More than one personnel director has told me that there is an indefinable something about certain applicants that offers conviction that this boy or that girl will take hold and prove very helpful. Try to give that impression. In all sincerity you could say: "I don't know for certain. But I believe I am well prepared for a beginning job like this. If I get it, I'll do my best to make a success of it." Don't, for goodness sake, gush and say, "Oh, I just *know* I could do it!" Unknowingly you may have picked a job beyond your depth and such prattle will count against you doubly if you fail.

### PERSONAL QUESTIONS ARE NOT IMPERTINENT

When someone who is interviewing you asks, "Do you live at home or board?" will you assume they are being unduly inquisitive about your personal affairs? You may think it is none of their business, but they feel differently, and for good reason. This question usually grows out of unfortunate experiences that companies have had with young people who were on their own, away from home for the first time. Freed from home supervision, they may have gone out too much at night, had insufficient sleep and nourishment, and have been unable to maintain their efficiency at work. In the best type of office, the management

likes to know that their younger employees have some sort of supervision as to hours and living conditions, because they recognize the business asset of health.

When my sixteen-year-old niece was living with me and looking for her first position in the business world, I was delighted when she reported that a certain firm had asked her whether she lived at home. It was in her favor, in their eyes, that she made her home with a relative, since it relieved her employer of feeling any moral responsibility for a pretty country girl, alone in a strange city.

### **DON'T BE TOO TRUSTING**

But, sometimes when you are asked whether you live at home, the questioner may have a less worthy motive than concern over your health and efficiency. I regret to say that occasionally employers may take advantage of the fact that employees live at home in order to offer them a lower salary than they could possibly live on if they were paying for their board and room. If you are a judge of human nature in any degree, you should be able to tell when this is the reason for interest in your living conditions. If you live at home, say so, and if you pay board at home, say that you have to pay your board as you would anywhere else. If you live at home and do not pay board or if the payment is very small, you must decide whether the experience you will gain from the job will compensate for the meager salary. In that case, you can avoid the issue by merely replying that you live at home. Then, if the offer is made, you can make your decision, weighing experience against remuneration. Some beginners, especially recent college graduates, have lost real opportunities by balking at the beginning salary offered. Others have begun low and found themselves exploited. May your good fairy help you!

### **LOOK AND ACT HEALTHY**

If for any reason you look pale or ill, you will probably be asked if you have had any serious illness recently. Your con-

science will have to guide your reply. There is no use in taking a hard job if you are physically unequal to it. On the other hand, if you have been ill but are definitely recovered, you are justified in claiming health. If you are naturally pale or underweight but are really in excellent health, you may explain this briefly, or simply say you are always well. Employers have had so much grief with people who either were not well or claimed illness as an excuse for frequent absence or lateness that they are cautious about hiring applicants who appear to fall into this classification. And they are just as wary of the overweight individual as the thin one. If, by firm muscles and good color, you show that you spend your week ends out of doors and take other precautions to preserve health, it's all in your favor.

#### HAVE A GOOD ANSWER READY

The question, "What makes you think you want to work for us?" is sometimes a poser for beginners, unless they are so fortunate as to apply for a beginning job in a business that especially interests them or about which they are well informed. You must think about this question a little before each interview. It is a subtle one. The employer is usually trying to find out if you think you have something special to offer to him. Above all, don't be like the woman who told me that the only reason she was a teacher was because of the pay, the hours, and the vacations! If your reason for seeking that particular position is based on the fact, and nothing else, that there is a beginner's job open, keep that to yourself, and come up with a statement that betrays less self-interest. If you have picked that firm for some reason related to the firm, such as their reputation, be careful not to appear so flattering as to cause your sincerity to be doubted. If you think you have something to contribute to the business within your sphere of experience, say so. But this rarely happens on beginning jobs. You'll find your own answers to this question. It may be the very query that will elicit from you the words that will nail the job for you.

But mere glib patter will not impress. So watch your step, here.

Applicants who have worked before may find, "Why did you leave your last position?" as hard to answer as beginners find the query, "Have you ever worked?" If you have not worked, you will be spared this one. If you did have a small job for a short time, be truthful about what happened. The prospective employer can easily check up on what you say, if he is really interested. It is no longer considered a disgrace to lose a job. War industries that hired spectacularly have cut their forces or closed. Many beginners have lost their jobs before they were able to glean much experience, because when firms cut down, the newest employees are usually the first to go. Businessmen understand such situations and will be sympathetic if you state the case frankly. However, if you stammer and stumble, grow red in the face and mumble something unintelligible, you are likely to give the impression that you failed outright, when such is not the case.

#### **BEWARE OF FLITTING FROM JOB TO JOB**

There is a type of semibeginner about whom employers are not enthusiastic. This is the young man or woman who flits from one job to another, giving them all up voluntarily. True, if you have quit one job, or even two, you can admit it and perhaps not be discredited, for you may have had excellent reasons for leaving. But if you have left four or five jobs in a row, after working only a few months in each, your record will soon count against you. In spite of your explanations, the employer may fear you are one of those restless people who lose interest as soon as the novelty wears off. And you may be! Or you may not have to work, and so you take a vacation whenever the routine conflicts with your personal life or plans. Or you may have an interfering family. Or you may be unable to take correction and discipline. An application card showing a great many positions held and deserted is apt to condemn you in the eyes of prospective employers. It is well to bear this in mind when you are bored with a job or think you can go out and get something

better. Good jobs are never so plentiful that they can be cast aside blithely, and any good employment manager will be inclined to think you lacking in common sense if you are in and out of jobs too frequently. When you have a good reason for changing, or have manifestly bettered yourself, that is something else.

### KEEP YOUR DIGNITY

Let us presume that you have worked for a short time and have left a job on your own initiative or because your resignation was "requested." What are you going to say in self-justification when asked about it? Very little, if you are wise. Think this out before you go to your interviews, and you will be able to speak about the experience without bitterness or pessimism. You would be amazed at the tales told prospective employers regarding former employers. All may be true, but by the time the stories are dragged out into the light, they sound like the complaints of a bad-tempered child. They even sound like the justifications of a gossip or a "ne'er-do-well-enough." An employer will hesitate to take you into his firm if you run down the last place you worked. Tell your story briefly, honestly, and with dignity, and be content to "damn with faint praise."

The person who interviews you is likely to ask you, especially if you are a young man with little experience, "What do you want to be doing five years from now?" Even though this is a beginning job for which you are applying and perhaps not related to your career plan other than as a toe hold in business, be prepared to answer this question. It is asked as a gauge of your ambition and the amount of effort and intelligent application you will give to the job if you get it. Don't attempt to impress the employer with wild dreams and schemes. Be practical and simple. Make your answer show him you are not a drifter, rather that you are anxious to get started toward your goal. The lack of a plan evidenced by so many beginners is regretted by personnel directors. They will be more interested in you if they see you are working from blueprints.

**YOUR CHANCE TO SELL YOURSELF**

You are not ready for one type of interview until you are warned that someone may say at the very beginning of it, "Tell me something about yourself." Obviously, this is not a question, but rather an invitation for you to take the floor and tell your story. This is your big chance to present yourself in the most favorable light you can. How you meet it will show whether or not you are "just another applicant" or an outstanding individual. Make the most of it.

**REVIEW YOUR SALES POINTS**

In another chapter you will be told how to make a neatly typed résumé of your schooling, special training, the skills in which you are qualified, and the positions you have filled or can fill. This will be of great use to you as "evidence" in all interviews. In replying to a command to talk about yourself, it will prove invaluable. Study it before you go into any interview as the basis of a concise running statement that will high light your advantages and minimize your lacks. Keep it short. Remember, the employer is busy. He doesn't want you to become chatty, talk too much, and stay too long. His only interest in giving you the bit between your teeth is to ascertain whether you might prove a valuable employee. Also, this method of interviewing you, he feels, will give him a "slant" on your personality that questions might not reveal. Therefore, stick to the point, and don't make a speech. Conversationally, and not too rapidly, say something like this:

"You can see from my accent, Mr. Brown, that I was born in the South. I was graduated from a private school in Baltimore, where I took the equivalent of a four-year academic high-school course. Two years ago my family moved north, so it was possible for me to attend the Hadyn Business School, here. After graduation, I worked for six months as stenographer and typist in the Day and Night Bank. Mr. Burke, head of the Savings Department, can tell you about my work. As you know, the

Day and Night merged with the Home Savings in February. Unfortunately for me, they brought the older employees from the Home Savings and I was one of a number who had to go. I'm a rapid typist, and can take dictation at 120 words a minute. I feel that I could be of value to your organization because I am familiar with savings-bank work. However, I have not had so much experience but what it would be easy for me to learn your ways of doing things. I get along well with people. In fact, I like people, but I have learned not to mix my business and my social life."

No one interviewer is likely to ask you all these questions, nor will they necessarily be phrased as I have phrased them. But if you spend several weeks looking for a job, by the time you find work you will have answered all these and many more and will have gained some measure of ease and poise thereby. Applicants experience two kinds of nervousness, both induced by fear. They are nervous for fear they won't say the right thing, and they are nervous for fear they won't get the job. Knowing some of the answers before the interview will eliminate the first fear and pave the way to eliminating the second. With these major fears out of the way you can be yourself during the interview.

### REHEARSING PREVENTS STAGE FRIGHT

Now that you have an idea of the kind of questions that are likely to confront you during the coming interviews, plan your answers and rehearse them. And I mean *rehearse*. The greatest star would be rigid with fright if she had to face an opening night without sufficient rehearsal. And you are going to try to present yourself on a new stage, so you will need preparation, too. Of course, I am not suggesting that you prepare stock answers, memorize them, and rattle them off like a parrot. You might just as well make a record and play it for the person you are to see! But I do want you to marshal your ideas, make a few notes, and try yourself out, so that your choice of words will be selective and your performance smooth when you are actually

in the interview. One of your parents or a friend will doubtless be willing to play the part of employer in such a preview. But, if you can't find a stooge, stand in front of a mirror and ask the questions of yourself, watching how you look when replying. Even with a one-man rehearsal you'll learn a great deal about yourself and how you impress others and about what to do in an interview.

Once a young neighbor of mine who was about to apply for his first job, a summer position as office boy, asked me for help. He had an appointment, but as the time for the interview approached he developed a bad case of stage fright. We both were acquainted with the man to whom he was applying, but even so he insisted, "I can never go in and talk to a big businessman like Mr. Lynch."

"Let's try it out, so you'll know what to say," I suggested. Accordingly, George went into an adjoining room which for the time being had become Mr. Lynch's office. As Mr. Lynch, I greeted him with, "Good morning, George. How are you?"

The first few times George gulped, "Good morning. This is my summer vacation and I thought maybe you needed another office boy." We finally improved upon this until his reply was, "Good morning. I'm fine, thank you. Mr. Lynch, I want to work this vacation and I wondered if you could use another office boy, or needed one while your regular boy is on his vacation." So far so good.

"What makes you think you can do the work?" I asked next.

George floundered. "Why . . . I hadn't thought about that . . . I just wanted a job. I thought I'd like to make some money."

I pointed out that self-interest as the prime reason for seeking a job was the wrong approach, and that he should offer something that would be to the employer's advantage. George finally worked up a speech that went somewhat like this: "I haven't had much experience, Mr. Lynch; but I'm a hard worker at anything I tackle, and I've run errands in my uncle's office, so I know about what the work will be, and I know the city."



Then, after a stage discussion of what salary he thought he was worth, my young friend was ready to tackle the big businessman with more confidence. I shall never forget the beaming face that greeted me later in the day when he ran into my office shouting, "I saw him and I got the job!" I am certain no other interview in George's life has ever seemed so hard, after that victory.

### LISTEN TO YOUR VOICE

Surprisingly, one of the things a beginner needs most is to become accustomed to the sound of his own voice. Rehearsing the interview helps you to get used to what seems the positive booming of your voice in an otherwise quiet room. When practicing what you will say, also listen to your voice and adjust the volume so that you are neither whispering nor yelling. If you have a tendency to speak too rapidly, be sure to curb this both in rehearsal and during the interview. Avoid speaking in a stilted manner or in a monotone. Be natural. Use a conversational tone and manner. "Canned" speeches are seldom effective.

While you are practicing for your interviews, be sure to watch your inflection, as well as the tone and pitch of your voice. It is astonishing what a difference the emphasis of one word can make in your reply to certain questions. Many beginners ruin their chances of securing work because their tone of voice is negative. When asked whether they could handle a certain type of work, the timid souls reply doubtfully, "*I think I could.*" The interviewer at once becomes dubious, too. The same question can be answered with the same words and still create an entirely different effect. "*I think I could,*" said confidently, with some emphasis on *think* and still more on *could*, will often land a job as surely as the wrong emphasis will put you out of the running.

### WATCH YOUR STEP

Your carriage in an interview is vastly important. Fortunately, entering a room is something you can rehearse. I am

told that at R. H. Macy & Co. in New York, the applicants for positions, male and female alike, must walk across a long approach to the desk of the employment manager. The applicant who is awkward or eccentric in walk or bearing is given no further consideration.

This is scarcely the place to pause for a lesson in posture, and for your sake I am hoping you have already learned how to walk, stand, and sit. If not, a few simple rules may help you. One of the best aids to erect and correct carriage is to learn to walk with a book on your head. This is an exercise invariably mastered by all stage people and models. You can easily practice this stunt in the privacy of your bedroom until you have learned to walk easily and gracefully without tipping the book off. Someone has said you should "stand, sit, and lie *tall*." In other words, stretch yourself so that your back is straight and your shoulders easy, not thrown back. When you walk, keep your toes turned slightly in, rather than out. The knees should be free, not rigid. Then walk from your hips. Above everything, don't slouch, or stick out your stomach. Buttocks and stomach should be held in. All this may come naturally to young women, who are interested in making the most of their appearance. But young men, too, must consider carriage. Those who have had Scout or military training have been taught how to carry themselves. Those who have not can use the rules given above. And don't, above all things, slouch into an office with your head pushed forward, your shoulders drooping, and your hands in your pockets.

Practice walking into a room, standing quietly and at ease until you are asked to sit down. Then sit down, without crossing your knees. This informal position is too unbusinesslike for your errand. Keep both feet quietly on the floor and near each other. Practice sitting still. Let your hands fall naturally and comfortably in your lap. Girls will have a pocketbook with them, boys possibly may have a brief case. Do not lay either of these down on the employer's desk. Try not to have anything else with you. To be laden down with packages suggests

concern for other matters than the present interview. Sit well back in your chair, erect but relaxed, ready for questioning. You might try out this routine before a full-length mirror, in the clothes you plan to wear job hunting. Don't blame me if such a preview discloses considerable necessary work with your posture before you are satisfied!

### QUESTIONS YOU MAY ASK

Some interviewers, when they have finished questioning you, will say, "Is there anything you would like to ask about the position?" Usually, they will not do this unless they are seriously considering you. Here is your opportunity to ask some of the things you would like to know if this is to be your job. One of these questions, unless it has already been made entirely clear, is, "What are the duties in this position?" You know the chief part of the work is stenographic, let us say, but there will be many things to do besides taking shorthand notes and transcribing them. You would have a better picture of the job if you knew how many men would dictate to you and whether you would need to know how to transcribe from cylinders, say. You will have your own questions to ask, undoubtedly, but don't ask foolish ones about something you ought to realize through using your imagination.

Often, this is the time to bring up the question of salary, if it has not already been discussed. If you have been sent by an agency, you probably know what salary is paid, but sometimes the matter of compensation is left open. This means that what is paid will depend upon the ability and experience of the person engaged. If the employer or his representative has encouraged you to feel you will be considered for the position, and it is not clear to you what the salary is, you had better ask. The time for any discussion of price, for services or merchandise, is at the end of the conversation. If you began an interview by asking, "What does this job pay?" you would be labeled as being interested only in the pay envelope and not in what you could do to make yourself useful. That would be very poor strategy.

But toward the close of the interview, if necessary, it is all right to ask, "What does this position pay?"

Your school will have advised you, or your study of want ads will have given you an idea of the current salary scale in your locality for different office positions. You should be familiar with this for several reasons. If you are asked what you will work for, you should not state a salary that is either more or less than is customarily paid. Should you be offered less than you know this work is worth, ordinarily, you can quite properly say, "I thought typists were getting \$—— a week." If the offer is an effort to take advantage of your inexperience, this will at least show that you are conversant with business practices, and the would-be "chiseler" will respect you all the more. I don't have to tell you what to do if the salary offered is more than is customary. Take it!

There are interviewers who will not give you a chance to ask questions. When they have finished catechising you, the interview is over. In 90 per cent of your interviews you had better accept this point of view and not try to take the lead into your own hands. But in the other 10 per cent of these cases, and in any instance where the interviewer appears friendly and unhurried, it is legitimate for you to say, "May I ask something?" Have your question ready, and state it as concisely as possible. Be sure it is an intelligent one, not overweighted with self-interest. Such questions as: "How much vacation would I get—with pay?" or, "Would I have to work Saturday afternoons?" or, "Has the man I'd work for a good disposition?" are better left unasked. These are all things you will find out soon enough once you are on the job—and if you don't get the job, you won't have to worry about them. The questions you can take with you to an interview, all tied up in neat phrases, must be concerned with what would be expected of you on this particular job. Often, they will be answered early in the discussion, so that you need not ask them.

Your purpose in looking up the firm with which you had an appointment was to inform yourself about the kind of business,

the products made, the location of main and branch offices, etc. This information will come in handy if you are given an opportunity to ask a few questions. But unless you are reasonably sure of getting the position, you have no right to prolong the interview by asking questions about the firm. To ask, "Would I work here or at your 38th Street branch?" would be rather premature when you don't know whether they are going to put you to work at all.

### HARD LUCK STORIES TABOO

So far, in anticipating what you will say in that important business twosome known as an interview, you have been positive. Your chances of success are in proportion to your maintaining a positive attitude. Remember that you have something to offer that somebody wants. You are not an untrained person going out *begging* for work. You are a well-trained prospective employee who offers needed skills and abilities. And you must always approach your interviews from this point of view. Never, under any circumstances, will you try to get a job by telling a hard luck story.

I am constantly surprised to find beginners, and older workers, too, who think telling their troubles a good way to get jobs. They seem to think they are unique in having been "out of work for a long time," or having had "sickness at home." Plenty of other people have these, and worse problems, yet they meet them without whining. What employers are looking for is efficient, willing people who can help the business earn a profit. Alert, confident people are needed to do this, not "crape hangers" who stress their financial needs and wail about their personal worries.

Sometimes a kindly interviewer in an employment agency will sense a great need under a brave front, and just because the applicant has not whined will go to unusual lengths to help her. I recall the case of Amy Baker, one of those numerous homeless girls in New York, who became a protégée of our office. Amy did not tell us her troubles, which were plenty! She was an

experienced medical stenographer, and whenever she talked to us, she spoke only of what she could do and the kind of position she hoped to get. We admired her courage so much we went out of our way to help her keep up her morale until such time as we could place her in the type of position for which she was well fitted. When this time finally came, we had an office celebration, though we didn't tell Amy about it. In contrast to this case, we made short work of the many who boldly tried to work on our sympathies.

### **BE IMPERSONAL**

When you get those coveted interviews with business firms, your chances will be absolutely nil if at any time you inject a personal note. For instance, trying to win out over others because you need the job worse than someone else is the worst sort of strategy. If there is any competition, let it be on the constructive side. Let it be seen from the way you handle yourself how much better trained you are, how much quicker you are mentally, how much more interested you are in doing a good day's work for the salary you will be paid. If you stand out from the crowd on these and other positive traits, you will get the job. But never because you need it most or need it at all.

Now you are almost ready for your first interview! A little rehearsing and away you'll go. But before you make your first appointment, let's be sure you know how to make the most of your appearance in that all-important première. So, time out, now, for dress and grooming!

### **QUESTIONS**

The following questions, actually asked applicants, will give you additional preparation for employment interviews. Study them and answer them thoughtfully. Be prepared to discuss them.

1. Are you living at home and how many are in your family?
2. What is your father's occupation; also your brothers' and sisters'?
3. Do you contribute toward keeping the home?
4. If you live in an apartment or board, do you send money home?

5. Are you engaged? Do you intend to marry soon? If you are a girl do you intend to work after your marriage?
6. What are your interests outside the office?
7. How much time do you give to reading, and what do you like to read?
8. Are you interested in music, and are you talented in it?
9. Where do you go for amusement and recreation?
10. How many nights during a week are you out after ten-thirty?
11. Have you traveled to any extent, and where? If not, would you like to? Where?
12. Do you like people? Do you think people like you?
13. Do you learn quickly? Have you a good memory?
14. Are you able to take instructions and follow them accurately?
15. How well do you take constructive criticism?
16. Will you work overtime? Will you do so if notified at the last minute even though you have an engagement?
17. When you have completed one piece of work will you hunt more work to do?
18. Do you think for yourself or follow the majority?
19. Can you admit your mistakes with good grace?
20. Have you a sense of humor?
21. If your work brings you in contact with people whom you consider inferior, either mentally or socially, what will be your attitude?
22. Do you want to be outstanding in your work, or just get by?
23. What salary do you want? What salary do you think you are worth?
24. How soon will you want a raise? How much of your salary will you save?
25. What salary did you make on your last job? Why are you willing to take less? (or) Why are you asking for more?
26. Will your former employer give you a good reference?
27. What kind of person was your former employer?
28. If your future employer does not conduct his business in the same way as your former employer, and you think his methods are wrong, what will you do?
29. Do you think that you prefer a woman or a man boss? Why?
30. What would you do if you found that a department head was not fair in dealing with the employees?
31. Would you watch the clock or concentrate on your work?

32. If you were the president's secretary would you help fold and mail the daily correspondence and general mail from the entire office, if not busy with your own duties?

33. Would you talk about your employer or the company outside the office, even at home?

34. What would you do if your employer asked you to get some information on a fellow employee and bring it back to him?

35. Would you repeat office gossip?

36. If you had not been told to do so, would you open your employer's mail and arrange it for him, or would you wait until he gets to the office?

37. In high school were you in the upper third of your class?

38. Do you like figures?

39. Why do you want a position?

40. What magazines do you read regularly?

41. Give the names of a few books you have read recently (not in school).

42. Have you taken a physical examination recently?

43. What serious illnesses have you had?

44. Are you willing to be examined now by our male physician at the company's expense, and regularly once a year while in our employ?

## **PROJECTS**

Here are some sample interviews, based on real-life situations. Study them carefully and see what is wrong with the applicant's technique, attitude, or what not.

### **I**

Paula Wilson worked for a short time after she left school, and did very well. But the firm went out of business and that left Paula high and dry. She is now looking for another job, is terribly discouraged, and feels that the world is against her. Paula has managed to get an interview with a firm that uses many office workers. Let's listen in.

**INTERVIEWER:** What kind of work are you looking for?

**PAULA:** Oh, anything. I've been out of work a long while, and I'm having such a hard time, I'll take any kind of a job you have.

**INTERVIEWER:** We only take people on who can do *something*, not just *anything*. What can you do?



PAULA: Oh, I can do everything—type, take shorthand, work on the books. You needn't be afraid to give me a job, I . . .

INTERVIEWER: You say you have worked. What did you do in your last job?

PAULA: Well, it wasn't much of a job, and the firm treated me just terribly. They must have known they were going to close down when they took me on, but did they tell me? No, not until the week before. . . . I was doing typing, but, as I said, the job didn't amount to much, and neither did the firm.

INTERVIEWER: We haven't any opening for typists just now, Miss Wilson.

PAULA: (*Becoming panicky*) Oh, you just must give me a job. I've got to have work. My mother's been sick for a long time, and my father's out of work, and I'm sure I need a job worse than anyone else. . . .

INTERVIEWER: I'm sorry, but, as I say, we have no vacancies, at present, in your kind of work.

Rewrite this interview, with Paula saying the right thing instead of the wrong, and see whether the interview might not have come out differently.

## II

Ann Markham made an excellent impression on the placement bureau of her school, because she was among the top students in her class and she knew how to dress to bring out her best points. Also, Ann had good family and social background, and the school felt she would handle herself well in an interview. Consequently, when the Holt Manufacturing Company telephoned the school and asked for a promising beginner, the placement director gave Ann the first chance at the job.

Looking her most businesslike best, Ann called at the offices of the Holt Manufacturing Company. She had been told to telephone in advance for an appointment, but Ann was sure that would not be necessary, because she had met Mr. Holt socially and that ought to get her in and get the job for her, too.

We meet Ann at the reception desk.

ANN: I'd like to talk with Mr. Holt, if he's in.

RECEPTIONIST: (*Looking Ann over*) Which Mr. Holt? And who shall I say is calling?

ANN: Why Mr. . . . Mr. I'm not sure. I didn't know there was more than one. The young Mr. Holt, I mean. You can tell him it is Miss Markham to see about that secretarial position.

RECEPTIONIST: Oh, you want to see Mr. Armstrong, our personnel director. Who sent you over?

ANN: The Blank School. They felt I was just the girl for the position, and I'm sure I am, too.

RECEPTIONIST: I'll see whether Mr. Armstrong can see you. He has several appointments and there are some other applicants ahead of you.

ANN: (*Becoming flustered*) Well, I don't get that. I understood he expected our school to send him somebody very, very good, and I am the Blank School's first choice. Please tell him I'm here.

The receptionist tells Ann to sit down, and an hour later a somewhat subdued Ann is sent in to see Mr. Armstrong.

The interview has progressed very well, up to the point where Mr. Armstrong asks Ann what her outside interests are.

ANN: (*Feeling very sure of herself*) Oh, dancing . . . I just love to dance! And I sing, of course. Maybe you read about my last recital, in the *Tribune*. I suppose I'd call music my hobby, really, but I hope to be able to go into it professionally some day.

ARMSTRONG: Then business isn't your first love, Miss Markham?

ANN: Well, no, not exactly. I went to business school so I could work and get money for my singing and dancing lessons. But my school will tell you I am very good at shorthand, and, of course, I'd just love to be a secretary, too.

ARMSTRONG: We don't start beginners as secretaries, but after working here a year or so several girls from your school have become secretaries.

ANN: Oh, yes. I hear Mary Meighan has gone right up with you people. She's one of my very best friends.

ARMSTRONG: Yes? And Helen Dobson is another. Do you know her?

ANN: No, she was several years ahead of my class. (*Looking up excitedly*) Wasn't that Harry Holt who went through the hall just then?

ARMSTRONG: Yes. Do you know him? He's understudying his father.

ANN: No, really? I don't know Mr. Holt well, but I've danced with him at the Country Club.

**ARMSTRONG:** If you know Harry you must know Joe Wilcox.

**ANN:** (*Thinking she is getting along famously*) Do I? And his fiancée, Hazel Cross! I went to boarding school with Hazel.

**ARMSTRONG:** (*Rising*) It's been very pleasant talking with you, Miss Markham. I'll tell Harry you were in.

**ANN:** (*Rising also, and realizing she has used all the time allotted to her*) Thank you. Yes, do remember me to Mr. Holt. And thank you so much for the interview. I'm sure it would be wonderful to work here. Good afternoon.

Rewrite this interview from the time Ann arrived at the offices of the Holt Manufacturing Company. Using no more words, show how she could have utilized the time to better advantage.

What did Ann say that would have been better left unsaid?

Even though the interview got out of hand, how could Ann have brought it back to a discussion of the position for which she was applying and to her fitness for it?

### III

The following interview is one I have staged before business-school audiences in many cities. Unfortunately, it is all too typical of a certain type of application. I am playing the part of a personnel director for a firm called the Raymond Paint Company. The applicant, John Carter, is looking for his first office job. His letter to Mr. Raymond, the head of the firm, has been referred to me.

*(Enter Carter, with brief case, hat on back of head, his manners very casual)*

**CARTER:** Hi yah, Mrs. Gibson. Carter's the name.

**MACGIBBON:** Good morning, Mr. Carter. (*Carter seats himself without waiting to be asked. Crosses legs and swings foot. Lays hat and brief case on MacGibbon's desk. Looks around.*)

**CARTER:** Nice place ya got here.

**MACGIBBON:** (*Looking at Carter's letter which was on her desk*) Yes.

This is an excellent letter of application you wrote us, Mr. Carter.

**CARTER:** Oh, yeah. They taught us that at school.

**MACGIBBON:** Mr. Raymond, our president, is interested in employing as stenographers young men of executive ability whom we can promote into our sales or accounting departments.

CARTER: That suits me. I'm lookin' for some place where I can go up fast.

MACGIBBON: Have you had any experience, Mr. Carter?

CARTER: (*Nonchalantly*) No, but don't let that worry you. I catch on quick.

MACGIBBON: I see. What are your outside interests, Mr. Carter?

CARTER: (*Smiles, and warms up, the only time during the interview. Pulls chair closer. Takes out cigarette case, offers one to MacGibbon, and starts to smoke. When MacGibbon refuses cigarettes, offers her gum.*) Now you're talkin'. I played football and baseball in school—made the freshman team the year I was at college. Now that I'm out of the army I play tennis every morning. I'd always have to leave early Tuesdays. I have to get home to dinner early because my handball team plays every Tuesday at 7:00.

MACGIBBON: (*Coolly*) That little matter of undertime would take care of itself, I'm sure.

CARTER: What salary does this job pay, Miss McGinnis?

MACGIBBON: We start men stenographers at \$30 to \$35 a week, depending on what they can do.

CARTER: Gosh, that ain't much. Seems like I oughta get more, considerin' I ain't worked before and got a lot to learn.

MACGIBBON: That's one way of looking at it.

CARTER: What kinda guy will I work for? I mean, what kinda disposition has he? I've heard about these big shots that come to the office all crabby the next day—after the night before . . .

MACGIBBON: (*Interrupting*) Our executives are all gentlemen, Mr. Carter. But I won't take any more of your time. I have your number here (*pointing to letter*). If Mr. Raymond wishes to speak with you, I'll get in touch with you.

CARTER: Okay. (*Gathers up hat and brief case, puts hat on back of head*) So long. (*Starts off whistling, apparently unconscious that he has queered his chances*)

Rewrite this interview, leaving the questions the same, and having John give answers that will build up the interviewer's confidence, rather than tear it down.

Cite six things John does during the interview which would be classed as bad manners.

## CHAPTER VII

### DOES YOUR APPEARANCE RATE A JOB?

Perhaps I should have put this chapter first in your preparation for job getting. It's that important! Believe it or not, *appearance literally counts 75 per cent in every employment interview.* Getting appointments and learning all the answers doesn't mean a thing unless your appearance wins the interviewer's approval at a glance.

So let's take down our hair and talk it over, from head to toe as it were, *now*, before you have any interviews. For I want you to write "dress and grooming" at the top of your list of things you must rehearse. And that goes for young people of *both* sexes.

When I say "rehearse" dressing correctly for a job I mean it in all seriousness. Not just a casual "once-over" of possible clothes you might wear, but actually putting them on, and sitting and standing in them. It is being done in several up-and-coming commercial schools that I know of, and probably in many more. A postgraduate business school in California insists that its seniors wear business clothes one day a week during the last few months before graduation. "Our students often say they don't feel at ease in formal business clothes. All right then, they'd better wear them more often, so they won't feel strange when they go out after jobs," the principal of the school told me. In a private business school in Pittsburgh a dress rehearsal for employment interviews follows a class discussion of what to wear. Since this is part of a course in *How to Get a Job*, each student's costume is criticized by the class. If your school doesn't give you this personal coaching on appearance, you'll have to do it for yourself. And you can.

## BUSINESS WALLFLOWERS

Employment agencies—school, state, and private—are more interested in the beginner who looks prepared to meet the business world. You may have been a “straight A” student, and you may have a beautiful soul, but when you present yourself to be interviewed neither is apparent. The interviewer sees one of two persons. She sees one whose trim appearance pleases her sense of fitness, or she sees one whose inappropriate costume offends her business taste. Don’t put that totally unnecessary obstacle in your way.

Possibly a suitable appearance is not so necessary in small communities where everyone knows everyone else. Home folks don’t look at one with the jaundiced eye of a stranger; but let John and Jane leave home for new worlds to conquer, and their good appearance becomes a weapon of attack that they can ill afford to be without. Remember, the interviewer’s first glance may decide for or against you, according to your appearance.

No busy businessman or employment agency interviewer has time to dig for the character, capability, and skills that may be hiding behind an untidy exterior. It is first impressions that count. As Willard C. Ackerly, former Employment Manager for the New York Stock Exchange, says: “The world should not, but generally does, judge by appearance . . . . People will not speak about appearance, but it will be the basis of their opinion of you.”

When I am lecturing on appearance, there is always someone who rises up at this point to tell about someone *he* knows who has a grand job, yet “looks a fright.” Yes, I know such stray cases, too. When jobs are plentiful and employers are harrassed with much work and little help, concessions are made in favor of good workers, even though they may dress inappropriately. When that happens, the overdressed and the sloppy looking are marked for dismissal as soon as conditions change. Employers have long memories! So why start out with a needless handicap? Instead, why not be one of those who need have no fear of times in which jobs are scarce and employers are choosy? After all,

a good appearance is much easier to acquire than are the skills which you have so laboriously mastered.

#### SKILLS OF COURSE—BUT APPEARANCE TOO!

The value employers place upon appearance shows up when they telephone employment agencies for suitable employees. They give all the personal requirements first, beginning with appearance, before they say a word about ability. Typical orders are: "Send me an attractive-looking stenographer, not over twenty-five, I think. Accuracy is more important than speed in this job." Or, "Have you a young man about twenty-three whose appearance is outstanding? He must know something about bookkeeping. A good disposition is important. We'll start him as a general clerk and he can go on up into executive work, provided that he has what it takes." Employers rather naively assume they are getting proficiency in all the necessary skills, along with honesty, industry, and adaptability. What they fuss about is that the product be wrapped in cellophane!

#### WHAT IS MEANT BY "A GOOD APPEARANCE"

High as these requirements are, they are not unattainable. It has been estimated that 90 per cent of those seeking jobs can meet appearance standards, if they will only try. When employers stress "looks" they do not mean that they will employ only beautiful young women and handsome men. Far from it. Often a positively plain person who is neatly groomed and appropriately dressed will win out over a competitor, who, however stunning, has had the bad taste to dress conspicuously or who couldn't bother to clean up. Very often, too, an interesting person, dressed both suitably for business and becomingly as to type, will stand head and shoulders above all other applicants. Indeed, personality gets the job very often these days. More about that fascinating subject in another chapter! So be reassured that practically everything an employer hopes for in appearance is within your power to achieve. There are plenty of guideposts along the way.

One of these is a Personality Chart<sup>1</sup> for girls. It is put out by the women who are in charge of the largest offices in New York, the members of the Transcription Supervisors' Association. These women were asked by the leading commercial high schools and private business schools to summarize just what they wanted girls to wear when applying for jobs. A complete Personality Chart was their answer; and first in order of importance they placed appearance, as will be seen in that portion of the chart reproduced here.

APPEARANCE	EXPLANATION
<i>A. Wearing Apparel</i>	
1. Coat or suit	1. Of conservative cut and color
2. Dress	2. Of conservative cut and color. Modish but not extreme as to length of skirt and sleeve and as to depth of neckline. Even as to hemline
3. Accessories	3. Immaculate. Free from rip or tear. Feminine
4. Hat	4. Smart and becoming but not rakish or bizarre
5. Shoes	5. Clean. Conservative. No run-over heels
6. Jewelry	6. Appropriate to the costume. Unobtrusive
7. Restraining garments	7. Girdle, brassière, etc., when necessary
<i>B. Personal Grooming</i>	
1. Hair	1. Clean, vital, neat, suitably coifed for daytime wear. Natural color
2. Skin	2. Clean and clear
3. Brows	3. Following the natural lines
4. Teeth	4. Free from stains
5. Nails	5. Well tended. Free from nicotine or other stain. Only light shades of polish permissible
6. Make-up	6. Not too much. Suited to daytime wear and to one's natural coloring

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced by permission of the Transcription Supervisors' Association of New York. Printed in full in a booklet, *From Books to Business* issued by the Transcription Supervisors' Association.



And the requirements for young men are no less definite. Let no one imagine meticulous regard for dress and grooming is "sissy"! From the minute he makes his first appointment for a job-hunting interview until the last day of his business career, he is a marked man as far as appearance is concerned. Here are ten points the employer considers important:

#### CORRECT APPEARANCE FOR THE YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. His suit             | Conservative in cut. Navy, brown, or gray.<br>Spotless, well pressed and well brushed.<br>Sweaters, cords, and slacks taboo |
| 2. His hat              | Always. Never a cap or bareheaded. Held in hand when being interviewed  |
| 3. His linen            | Immaculate. No frayed collars and cuffs. A clean handkerchief, always   |
| 4. His tie              | In harmony with his suit. No collegiate knots   |
| 5. His socks            | In harmony with his suit. Always held up by garters   |
| 6. His shoes            | Oxfords, black or brown. Well polished. No run-down heels. Sports shoes taboo   |
| 7. His face             | Well shaved   |
| 8. His teeth            | Free from stains  |
| 9. His hair             | Frequently shampooed. No dandruff   |
| 10. His hands and nails | Clean. No nicotine stains   |

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF GROOMING

You will notice that grooming follows closely upon dress in both lists of requirements. How could it be otherwise? The most correct business clothes, if soiled and unpressed and worn by an individual obviously in need of a bath, would be of little use in landing a job. Likewise, an immaculately groomed person in too theatrical clothes or unsuitable clothes would not make a good impression. A combination of appropriate dress and careful grooming is what the employer expects—nay, demands.

Good grooming is a matter of habit. The young woman whose hair needs washing and the lad with dirty fingernails never suspect their negligence has anything to do with fruitless interviews. Being habitually careless in grooming, they are equally

negligent on that momentous occasion. They might as well say in so many words, "I didn't bother to get fixed up. This isn't a party." It is truly no party, but it is a *parting* of the ways—yours and the interviewer's—then and there! I have had employers and personnel directors say to me, "If Miss Blank didn't think enough of this interview to wash and iron her blouse, she isn't the sort of person we want." Sometimes they are not so specific and merely say, "I can't see her fitting in here," or "That boy wouldn't be neat in his work."

If all the dirty necks employers have told me about could be put end to end, we'd have some ostrich! And what millions of words mothers have poured out urging soap and water! As an employer I must add what to many applicants will be reminiscent of school-day admonitions: "Wash your neck! Scrub your hands! Clean your nails!" Sorry, but you will have to keep at it all your life and right now, as you begin one of the most decisive periods of your life, you cannot do better than to establish unalterable habits of careful grooming. The daily bath is the first and most important habit. The second is just as elementary—hands should be washed as often as they become soiled, every hour if need be!

Men are likely to wash their hair too often, and young women not often enough. The reason is obvious, but scalp specialists are wondering whether early baldness may not have some connection with the masculine habit of getting the head wet in the daily shower. I suggest that both young men and young women wash their hair not oftener than once a week and no less than once every two weeks. Vigorously brushing the hair twice a day, with the head held down, does wonders in enhancing natural gloss, curl, and high lights. But when we women have to keep a wave in, unless we are very clever at resetting our curls, brushing has to wait until just before each shampoo. A well-groomed head is an asset not overlooked by employers, prospective or present. And anyone can achieve it with little effort.

I leave men's haircuts to their barbers, who know more about the subject than I do. But I must warn my own sex against

going to an interview wearing an extravagant hair-do. If your hair is long and you luxuriate in wearing it flowing down your back, put it up for your interviews. Remember the "up" hair-do is smart and can be equally becoming. It will not only give you the neat and trim appearance by which employers set so much store, but it will add to your dignity. Often girls complain to me that they are turned down on jobs because they look too young; but there is nothing simpler than adding years to your appearance by piling up your hair. Along the same line, bobby socks and "flats" are the mark of the schoolgirl; stockings, and shoes with medium heels, the mark of the business girl. Likewise, dishtowels on your head and Sloppy Joe sweaters are childish fads, to be left behind when you face the business world. Apropos of head scarves, never commit the sin of wearing one to hide curls. Dress your hair before you leave home.

I remember one episode in my employment agency days when I was forced to tell a roomful of young women I could not interview any more that day. We had advertised for receptionists. As I looked over the applicants, I said, "None of you could be sent out on this job, on account of your hair." Only one out of the thirty returned the next day. "I took your tip and had my hair set," she greeted me. Just for her spunk and perception I gave her a card of introduction. She had what a job hunter needs—the ability to profit by criticism.

A permanent wave has got a job for many a woman. I know of a few schools which have experimented with the cash value of what the English call a "perm." When a young woman has looked in vain for a job, these schools have, in special cases, advanced the money for a permanent. The applicant usually obtained work and the school got back its investment. One post-graduate school that has a class in cosmetology uses its business graduates as guinea pigs. The cosmetology class gives shampoos, finger waves, and manicures before interviews, to the graduates who need them. This seems to be an unbeatable setup. The principal of this school keeps field representatives out scouting for jobs and knows what the employers in the community do and do not want.

One "pet peeve" with employers is red, purple, or other conspicuous nail polish. And this holds true all over the country. But many young women seem to think that an employer is a mere man and that the same technique they use on their "boy friends" will work in business. They laugh off any objections, forgetting that employers are not out to win their favor. The boot is on the other foot! More than one employer has told me he has fired a competent stenographer who ignored repeated hints, suggestions, or requests to forget red nail polish during office hours.

### **THE BOSS IS CONSERVATIVE**

"The red-fingernail battle still rages, but it's nothing to the red-toenail and bare-leg hate that employers have," a harassed employment agency manager recently wailed to me. But doesn't that suggest something? It seems to indicate pretty forcibly, I should think, that the boss, bless him, is a very conservative fellow. Whatever the new thing is, he's against it, even if his wife and daughter are wearing it. His office is his sanctuary from feminine foibles. For once he doesn't have to "take it." And you'll exercise true feminine guile if, within his office-castle, you bow to his preferences. Since the vogue for freakish hats, an employment agency in New York has gone so far in serving its clientele as to advertise, "Girls in tricky hats need not apply." So, my dears, be smart. No red toenails or bare legs; no silly hats—nothing which your feminine intuition tells you men detest. At least not when looking for work, nor from nine to five after you get it. Not if you are ambitious!

### **A LITTLE MAKE-UP GOES A LONG WAY**

And now we come to make-up; another matter upon which employers have very definite ideas. Watch your step, and be both artful and artistic in laying on the paint. The rule is simple and the results lovely: Use just enough to look naturally healthy and well groomed, and no more. If you have a natural, high color be content with a light film of powder and a dash of lipstick. The excitement of talking face to face with a strange

man who might possibly become your employer may make your color flare up. It would be a pity to spoil the effect with a purple flush of rouge, plus your own color. If, however, you need rouge, by all means use it. But be sure it blends with your natural coloring. If necessary, seek expert advice on just what shades of powder, rouge, and lipstick are best for you. Then be judiciously sparing in using them. Remember, many employers think they object to all make-up, just on principle. If you are clever in putting it on, they'll never suspect you! But you should hear what employment interviewers listen to every day of the week about girls who get "all dolled up"! Bizarre shades of rouge and lipstick, eye shadow, and mascara are just so many red flags to the bull. A tip to the worldly-wise—if you feel these vanities are too amusing to forswear, wear them only in the evening. That is the time for which they are intended, anyway. Certainly, they are never intriguing during an interview! A little eyebrow pencil is all right, if you need it, but do resist the temptation to pluck your brows to a thin line. It only makes you look like a picked chicken. For the sake of a tidy look, it is well to pluck any hairs that grow above or below the natural arch of the brow. And incidentally, at the moment that is the fashionable shape for them.

#### WHAT YOUR BEST FRIEND WON'T TELL YOU

That daily bath—stepped up to the two-a-day from June to September—also needs to be supplemented by the frequent use of a deodorant. More about this in our chapter on dress and grooming to keep the job. Here I want merely to say that "No B.O., please," is as frequent an order to an employment agency as is the usual "Send me a stenographer." Men and women alike seem to have a blind spot about themselves when it comes to the matter of perspiration. They always think it's the other fellow who offends. Employers, nurses, and personnel directors find employees so dense about taking a hint that rarely is the situation solved short of dismissal. Hence my earnest tip, "Be sure you are careful on this point while you are job hunting—

and afterward." When you are looking for work you are under nervous strain. And nervousness is likely to cause excessive perspiration. Hence an even greater need than usual to safeguard yourself by using a deodorant. If you have once perspired in a blouse, dress, coat, or suit, be sure to send it to the cleaner, or it will offset your other precautions.

When I speak to audiences on this matter of using deodorants, the men assume a smug air as much as to say, "Wonder why women offend? We never do," Oh, don't they! It is quite as necessary for men to use deodorants as for women. Well-groomed men are very careful on this score, for they know that perspiration odor is a handicap to success.

### **FEMININE APPROPRIATENESS**

To return to dress requirements for young women, the one word that sums up everything desired in an interview is "appropriateness." Many highly capable girls who have worked long enough to see well-dressed business girls galore, never seem to consider that this standard applies to them, too. They must have got jobs through lucky accidents, for their clothes certainly bear no relation whatsoever to job holding, or job getting. When out of work, they may even buy something special for job hunting, not realizing they'd much better have worn something they already had, such as a trim tailored suit, which happens to be "tops" for suitability.

Here's a case in point. One day, in my employment agency work, I received a call for an experienced stenographer for the New York office of a nation-wide group of department stores. Anne Harvey was listed in our files as an able and responsible worker whom we had placed in several positions, with good results. So I phoned Anne to come in and talk with me. She came, wearing a bright-red coat over a bright-green dress, topped off with a Spanish hat tied under her chin with a ribbon band. What to do? She would never land a job in that costume!

I suggested to Anne that she hide the strap under her hat. It was now just a large black hat with a high crown. Since the

office she was going to was in our building, I suggested that she leave the red coat with us. Her green dress, with her black hat, gloves, and bag, had a certain unity that would at least get by. "Employers are likely to judge applicants by their clothes," I told her. "It's better not to wear too bright colors on an interview." Anne indignantly answered that she had bought her coat and dress especially for job hunting and she thought I was very fussy indeed. So the red coat went. She didn't get the job, but I was raked over the coals for selecting her. "You ought to know that appearance is very important in our business," the personnel director snapped at me. And that was the last time Anne was sent out from our office.

But the wrong clothes are not always bright in color. Sometimes they are very wrong in type, more suited to a cocktail party or an afternoon tea than to the business scene. Here's the story of Mary Smith, a college graduate. Mary was to be interviewed by officials in a bank that planned to open a children's savings department. This was in a fairly small city, and the bank visualized a young woman in charge of the department who would call at rural homes and explain the idea. When they heard of Mary they were sure she was just the girl they wanted. She had an advanced degree in child psychology and several years' banking experience. So Mary was sent for. The official took one look at her. "Sorry to disappoint you," he said, "the position is filled."

Mary flushed crimson, turned, and left, too agitated to speak. She knew from his manner, and because she had been practically assured of the job, that the position was not filled. Something had gone wrong. What, she did not know. A friend of Mary's thought it might help to find out just what did happen. So she asked someone in the bank and passed the story along to me as a horrible example. It was simply this: For that all-important interview Mary wore a close-fitting black print afternoon gown, with a veiled toque, long glittering earrings, and elaborate accessories. The executive couldn't take it. He thought of the mothers, teachers, and children Mary would be meeting in her work. It took him only a second to decide that a more suitably

dressed young woman, even with fewer qualifications, would be a far better bet.

### THOSE "RAH RAH" BOYS

Young men err in only slightly different ways. They are likely to go to an interview dressed in campus styles or sport clothes. No hats and garterless socks are frequent *faux pas* they make. I have advised many a young man to purchase a hat and garters as part of his equipment for landing a job in business. Young men forget that the interviewer, especially if he is the Big Boss, may be a generation or two removed and that he thinks college or sports attire worn to business betrays a frivolous attitude toward life and work. Business is not looking for "playboys." Golf enthusiasts and fishing experts are already listed among the executives, and no more need apply.

### A MAN'S APPEARANCE COUNTS 90 PER CENT

A man who heads his own employment agency in Minneapolis once told me he believed a man's appearance counted 90 per cent in getting a job. "There's no use in my sending out a man to see an employer," he said, "unless he is immaculately groomed and tastefully dressed. If he can't impress me, the chances are he won't impress the employer. We get our fee—as opposed to the 'no-fee' agencies—because we are selective. Consequently we eliminate all those who don't qualify in appearance."

Similarly a young man employed by the New York State Employment Service, in the Rochester office, showed me a list he had prepared for distribution among the men who applied to him. It occupied a legal sheet and listed everything from a fresh shave to pressed trousers. As in the ten-point table given earlier in this chapter, it warned those just out of school not to go looking for work wearing cords, an open shirt, a sweater, or without a necktie. Furthermore, it warned applicants that a businessman would not overlook a slovenly appearance, whereas he would often be willing to overlook youth and inexperience when he was favorably impressed by appearance.

Such details as gay colored shirts, loud socks, and a rakish hat



with a feather in the band are spied out by the eagle eye of business. Doubtless if one were applying for a job as a barker in a circus, one would wear the most conspicuous clothes possible. Business, however, demands conservative, harmonious clothes for men as well as for women.

#### PLAN A JOB-HUNTING OUTFIT EARLY

Six months before getting through school is not too early for young people to begin planning job-hunting wardrobes. Few families can afford a complete new outfit just at graduation time. Therefore, the smart thing to do is to anticipate your needs and gradually assemble an appropriate costume. With such foresight, you will be surprised to find how little you will need to add when you are ready to start out on your first interview.

If you are a young man, you know you must wear a business-like suit. So see to it that you own one in navy, brown, or gray. If you must buy one, look at it as an employer would, and make a fairly mature choice. Forget those extra slacks you want or the new coat to go with the slacks you have. Both are all right in their place, but they won't help you when you job hunt. From now on you must plan *first* for the clothes you will wear on the job. As you purchase shirts and ties, get them to harmonize with the suit. Avoid the extreme sport shoes that tempt you, in favor of tan or black calf Oxfords, depending upon the color of your suit. It will be fun to get this outfit together. Perhaps your only purchase just before the momentous interview will be a hat. Don't buy a green one. Well-dressed businessmen think green suits and hats are beyond the pale.

Young women, in looking ahead toward their interviewing days, will do well to concentrate on the simple tailored suit. A navy, black, brown, or a tweed mixture, with a tailored felt hat and Oxfords with a Cuban or similar heel, are correct. No French heels. No spiked heels. No flat-heeled sport shoes. No open toes or heels, please! A tailored blouse is best with a suit, white if you prefer—provided it always is whitely immaculate. A scarf in a harmonious color or in pleasing contrast will finish

your costume. Be sure your gloves, preferably in a dark shade, are clean and whole. And *wear* them—do *not* carry them. Depending on what is the fashion, you can combine two colors in your costume or stick to one, as you choose. But whatever you do, keep it quiet and dignified.

Should you think you don't look well in a suit, the alternative is a crepe or wool dress worn under a coat. Again you are safest in black, navy, or brown. A mixed-tweed sports coat over a solid-color dress in a shade to harmonize with the tweed is a good choice. Both dress and coat should be simple in line—never fussy or elaborate. The best-dressed women, whether they spend a fortune or only a limited amount, always wear the simplest possible clothes. You can do no better than follow their lead. Remember, you may be asked to take your coat off during an interview. The employer is interested to see how you would look in the office. Woe betide you if your cuffs, collar, and scarf, as well as gloves, are not immaculate. The same rule of harmonizing or contrasting hat, shoes, gloves, and purse applies as well to dresses and coats as to suits.

"What if I go job hunting in the late spring and summer?" you ask. Well, then you're lucky, I think. For a very plain dark sheer or a modest print and a little jacket that goes with it will be cool, comfortable, and exceedingly attractive looking. You might even make a hit by wearing a white tailored hat, if you are willing to wash or clean it daily. White washable gloves—two or three pairs a day tucked in your bag—would help, too. It's that ineffably dainty look that registers. But you'll have to watch your make-up in summer job-hunting days. Powder has a way of disappearing when it's hot and humid, and a shiny nose is no asset.

#### WHY ALL THE FUSS?

You may think, as you come to the end of this chapter, that business is an old "fuss-budget." I admit that it is fussy, but I think it has a right to be. It does not demand quiet dress and perfect grooming just to be cranky or with an eye to feminine

appeal and Arrow-collar looks. It honestly feels appearance contributes to the character of the business itself. Did you ever stop to consider how much the young men and women working in an office have to do with setting the tone of the place? As they move about from one desk to another and one room to another, if they are dressed quietly and in good taste and if their voices are low and pleasant, they create an atmosphere of dignity and stability. Looking at such a scene, as a customer calling, you would have confidence in that firm. But if all the young people wore loud clothes, if they yelled back and forth to each other, and if they were all chewing gum, you would quickly feel there was something wrong with a business conducted like that. "Too free and easy. Not conservative enough. Wonder if the executives are as flashy? Guess this is no place to put my money," might very well be your mental checkup on the scene. Since most businesses are conservative, they prefer employees who will express this quality. Naturally they view prospective employees with an eye to how they would fit into the picture.

So, you see, I think employers are right in having high standards of appearance. And you can't go wrong in heeding them. But apart from what business requires, such standards for yourself will be an immeasurable help to you. You will find that your poise is greatly aided when dress and grooming have been a thoughtful rite. The whole story can be summed up in a few words: When you have been meticulous in getting yourself ready for an interview, you can forget how you look. Knowing that you are just about 100 per cent right, your self-confidence will reach a new high. Then all you need to do is concentrate on what you have to say, secure in your knowledge that if appearance counts 75 per cent you've passed that test already. And you are equally sure of your business skills. So you're all set to make a perfect score—and of course you will!

#### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Because it is important for their future happiness that young men and women know something of the cost, style, and quality of each others'

clothes, no separation on a basis of sex has been made in the topics for discussion or the exercises in this chapter.

1. Your textbook is conservative in saying, "Appearance counts 75 per cent in every employment interview." Many personnel directors place it at 90 per cent. Why is appearance so important when you are looking for work? How is it that employers can afford to be so fussy about externals? Granted that they are, discuss whether you can afford to be indifferent to your dress and grooming when you prepare to go job hunting.

2. Why should you rehearse correct dressing for business, in advance of an interview? Why isn't it enough to get suitable clothes together and put them on when you start out to look for work?

3. Explain what is meant by "a good appearance." Do "looks" and appearance mean the same thing? To have an attractive appearance is it necessary that a young woman be pretty or that a young man be handsome?

4. Practically all men in business dislike bright or deep red nail polish. Do you think that, because red nails are fashionable and girls like to wear them, they should do so when job hunting, regardless of the expressed feeling of employers on the subject?

5. See whether you can tell what was wrong with the appearance of these two applicants:

a. When she went to be interviewed, Nora Burns got herself together most carefully. She wore an Oxford-gray tailor-made suit, an immaculate white blouse, a becoming black sports hat, and suitable walking shoes. Nora carried her black gloves so that her long red fingernails would show, as she thought they added life to her somewhat somber outfit. Nora's lipstick matched her nail polish, and she wore a lot of it. In the sense of cleanliness, Nora's grooming was perfect but the odor of her expensive perfume was very noticeable.

Nora's appearance lost her the job, but no one thought it worth while to explain this. Do you see why she did? What changes would be necessary for Nora to meet the requirements?

b. Joseph McKay was what was called a "snappy dresser." He thought a lot about his surface appearance and confidently wore his newest sports clothes when he went out to apply for a job. These clothes consisted of a bright blue sweater, gray slacks, and a brown coat. Joe combed his hair carefully, but did not wear a hat. In fact, he did not own one. Joe shined his shoes for the interview, but failed to wash

his hands and clean his nails. When he needed a handkerchief to mop his brow, during the interview, Joe pulled from his pocket one that was both gaily colored and soiled.

What should Joe have worn? Where was his grooming all right and where was it at fault? When should Joe have begun to think about businesslike job-getting clothes and to get them together?

6. Discuss the relationship between correct business dress and good personal grooming. Can a young man or woman achieve satisfactory results in dress and yet be ruled out because of inattention to, or errors in, grooming? What about it when grooming is all right but the clothing worn is not appropriate?

7. What do you understand the word "appropriate" to mean in relation to correct business dress? Also the word "businesslike"? Taking navy blue, brown, or black as a basic color, describe what you would get together for job hunting, if you had *carte blanche* to buy whatever you like. Do expensive clothes necessarily make a better impression on an interviewer than inexpensive ones? If not, why not?

8. Why are employment agencies as particular as employers about the appearance of applicants who call on them? Would you be as careful of your appearance when calling upon an employment agency as upon an employer to whom you were sent?

Do you think an employment agency interviewer has any right to tell an applicant that he or she is not dressed or groomed correctly for an interview, and to suggest changes? If an agent talked with you about your unsatisfactory appearance, would you resent it or be grateful for the interest?

9. Will the knowledge that you are appropriately dressed and well groomed help you to walk, sit, and speak with more ease in an interview? What does the word "poise" mean in this connection?

10. Discuss the actual value of make-up to a young woman preparing for an interview? What should cosmetics, rightly used, do for a young woman applying for a position? Just how much make-up should she use on this momentous occasion?

11. Discuss the following statement: "A first-class appearance is a letter of introduction you can write for yourself."

12. What is meant by "clothes sense"?

## PROJECTS

1. Based on the explanation in this chapter of what is correct to wear when looking for work.

a. Make an inventory of your present wardrobe and assemble those clothes that will be suitable for job hunting.

b. Plan and list in detail what you will need to add in order to complete a suitable, businesslike costume.

c. Find out, by window shopping, what these additions will cost, keeping the cost well within your means.

d. Write a description of your job-seeking outfit, discussing the suitability of its type, color scheme, accessories, etc.

e. Work out a schedule for adding the necessary items between now and your graduation, so as to have the right things to wear, with a minimum of financial outlay.

2. Here are some illustrations, taken from real life, of young people who were turned down in interviews because of incorrect appearance. Study the descriptions and rewrite them, eliminating what you think wrong and substituting the right things.

a. When Frances Pollard, a very pretty young woman, applied for a position she wore a dark blue print dress and no hat. Over the dress she wore a very elaborate black coat, trimmed with fur. Although the coat was dressy, and of a type that should have been buttoned, Frances wore it open, like a casual coat. Equally casually she carried her gloves. Frances's shoes were open-toed and backless. Her hair was in a long, curly bob, which looked mussy. As to make-up, Frances wore a moderate amount, but her nails were a deep crimson.

b. Alex Simmons showed up for his appointment wearing a good gray suit that needed cleaning and pressing. His shoes were navy suede Oxfords, and his necktie was a matching blue, carelessly knotted. A great deal of Alex's pink shirt was visible, as he wore no vest. His socks were falling down over his shoes.

c. Helen Osborn wore a black tailored suit and a white blouse to her interview. Helen thought she was offsetting the sallowness of her skin by smearing her large mouth with quantities of life-red lipstick. Helen's nails were the same red, and so was the scarf she had wound carelessly around her head in a turban effect. From under the turban Helen's blonde hair protruded in wisps. At her throat Helen wore an immense red celluloid flower and on her gloveless hand a huge celluloid ring of the same shade.

In correcting the costumes of Frances, Alex, and Helen, limit your descriptions to 500 words each.

3. Study carefully the charts for correct business appearance given early in this chapter. Rate yourself on how well you conform now to the dress and grooming standards stated there. Allow fifty points for wearing apparel and fifty points for personal grooming. Based on your score, discuss in several short paragraphs how you can bring yourself nearer to a 100 per cent rating.

4. Write a 1,000-word paper explaining why business wishes employees to dress simply. Bring out the reasons why business places emphasis on an applicant's appearance during an interview.

5. A student who had attended a lecture on the subject of correct dress for job hunting summed up the advice as follows: "I must be neither too gay nor too drab." Another student said: "It is evident that the person who looks successful gets the job." See whether you can express the recommendations given in this chapter in one equally forceful sentence of your own.

## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

### I

**WOMEN STUDENTS**—select the answer that you consider best, for each of the following:

1. When looking for work, you should preferably wear a dress and coat that are (a) plaid, (b) dark red, (c) navy blue, (d) tan, (e) Kelly green.

2. Your hair should be worn in (a) elaborate curls, (b) a page-boy bob, (c) neat and close to your head, (d) long and fuzzy.

3. Your fingernails should be (a) without any polish, (b) long, Mandarin style, (c) deep red, (d) of normal length, with a light shade of polish.

4. The correct shoes to wear to business are (a) open-toed, backless slippers, (b) wedge-heeled novelty shoes, (c) conservative street shoes, (d) flat-heeled sports shoes.

5. When you go to an employment interview, your hat should be (a) large and floppy, (b) trim and tailored, (c) extreme and amusing, (d) left at home.

**II**

**MEN STUDENTS**—what is wrong with these statements?

1. When you go to an interview, wear the shirt that was clean yesterday. It is good enough.

2. You might feel stiff in a suit if you are not used to wearing one, so just go informally, in your sports clothes.

3. It is "sissy" to be particular about the cleanliness of your hands, nails, and neck. Nobody notices them.

4. If you can't afford to have your suit pressed, never mind. Certainly no one should expect you to do it yourself.

5. Brighten up a dark suit with a red tie and loud socks and shirt. That will show you have good taste in dress.

6. Businessmen like the collegiate type, so it is a good plan to go "Joe College" and wear no garters, necktie, or hat when you call on conservative executives.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE INTERVIEW

Once when I was lecturing in a Seattle theater on **How to Get and Keep a Job**, the question box brought me this question: "How can I give the impression of being a self-confident person?" My reply was, "*Be* a self-confident person." Feeling sure of yourself is an inner condition, a state of mind. It is not something you can assume. But it is something you can cultivate.

If you have thoughtfully put into practice the suggestions in the preceding chapters, you have been doing just that—cultivating self-confidence and poise as you advanced from point to point in your job-getting preparations. Now you are ready to meet that long anticipated moment when you will actually look into the eyes of an employer or someone who represents that important person.

Your first interview may be something you have worked hard to get, or it may be handed to you in the form of a letter or a card of introduction. At any rate, after such thorough preparation as you have undergone, your first interview should not be a dreaded or dreadful experience. Actually, you should have begun to look forward to this first interview, regarding it as an opportunity to prove how good you are. This is your chance to test out the ideas offered you here. In fact, these ideas should no longer be just something read in a book; you should have made them your own, in a way that will help you in selling yourself as an alert young business person.

#### AGENCY INTERVIEWS

If you have already called on employment agencies, as previously suggested, you doubtless have had one or two experiences in that type of interview. But there are a few things I want to

tell you about the employment agency interview, before we go on to discuss that face-to-face talk with a potential boss. In many ways it is just as important to make a favorable impression upon an interviewer in an employment agency as upon the person who interviews you directly for a job in a place of business. For the agency interviewer determines whether you will be sent out by them on job interviews, and upon that decision may depend whether you actually get opportunities for employment through this source. Everything we have said about the importance of your appearance in an interview applies equally to those conversations you have in employment agencies. How you look, what you say, and how you act will determine whether or not the agency has confidence in you and your ability and whether or not it feels you are an employable person whom it can place.

Although you may not realize it, your every action is being watched when you visit an employment agency. Remember that, though you pay the agency to help you, it cannot afford to try to place you unless you will do it credit. Even free employment agencies have to be selective in their choice of applicants for various positions, for, although the applicant is not their source of income, they still have to function successfully or lose their employer clientele. So bear in mind that you are being sized up as to whether you have brains and common sense and know how to handle yourself in a businesslike fashion. I was told in a State Employment Office that many applicants who came to the Recent College Graduates Department had trouble deciding at what counter they should line up to register. Signs saying A——F, G——K, L——S, T——Z were about the room, but since these graduates did not appear to know the alphabet they had considerable difficulty deciding where they belonged. None of this was lost on the interviewers, who frankly doubted whether these young people could find a telephone number, use a dictionary, or hold down a simple filing job!

**Application Blanks.** You are apt to make the acquaintance of application blanks in your early calls on employment agencies. So for your information I am reproducing here an application

Print last name..... First name..... Mr. Mrs. Miss		Work desired.....		Date.....
Address.....				Minimum salary expected.....
Telephone..... Social Security Number.....		Dictation speed..... Typing speed.....		Number years experience.....
Age..... Place of birth.....		Office machines used.....		Married.....
Religion..... How long in city?.....				Number of children.....
High school..... Years attended.....				Height.....
College..... Years attended..... Major..... Degree and year.....		Special training.....		Weight.....
		Special interests.....		When can you start work.....
		Languages spoken.....		

  

List the three positions you have held longest— Present or last position		Next to last position		Next to that	
Name of firm					
Address					
Kind of business Your position and dept.					
To whom may we refer?					
How long employed?—Dates					
Hours					
Salary (from—to)? Why did you leave?					

  

Additional references, not relatives		3. .... Signature	
1. ....			
2. ....			

A typical employment agency application form.

blank that is fairly typical of those you will be asked to fill out in agencies. It will pay you to study this blank carefully and to rehearse in your own mind what answers you would make to these fundamental questions. Do not take the attitude of many beginners and even experienced persons, who say in effect: "This is all a lot of nonsense. I can't be bothered filling out all this." Employment agency executives are unanimous in saying: "Fill out every line. Answer every question. If you have nothing to say in answer to a particular question, draw a line through the space to show you have at least given it consideration." These questions would not be asked if the information desired were not important to the agency. The personnel director of a New Jersey insurance company employing 400 girls complains that applicants just put the street number as their address and omit the city and state. With so many suburbs this is equivalent to no address.

In speaking to the interviewer, you may make a very favorable impression but, since she interviews thirty to fifty persons a day, she is not likely to remember just what you told her. Remember that the record you leave in the office will be the means of getting you a call from the agency, if it has a position you can fill. It is up to you to be sure this record really represents you and that it gives definite information.

After "Work Desired," you should state the kind of position you feel qualified to fill. Writing "anything" here will not be very helpful to the agency. If you do not know what minimum salary you could expect for the type of work, you can ask for information on this point. But wait until you have completed the record as far as you are able and are ready to hand it in. Constantly running to the interviewer to ask for aid and information will make you appear helpless.

**Ready Data about Yourself.** If you list yourself with several employment agencies, you could spend hours laboriously working over application blanks such as the one shown here. The better way, both for you and for the impression you make, is to save time by having these data with you, neatly typed. This personal

**data sheet** should include your name, age, address, birthplace, religion, weight, height, schools attended, college degrees if any, records made in contests of any kind, and any other facts that may be useful in placing you. For instance, if your family is Italian-American and you speak both Italian and English, record it. If you have traveled, say so. Such advantages might take you into a better job than the average beginner could hope to get. Knowing more than one language, travel, and other cultural assets can be as valuable in business as in the social world. If you have had experience, take a record of this with you, including dates of employment. Having such information on tap will not only help you fill out application blanks in record time, but occasionally a copy of your personal data sheet may be used in the absence of a formal application blank.

**Spelling and Handwriting.** When you are filling out an application blank in an agency or in a business firm, be certain to watch your spelling and handwriting. This is a time when an error or slovenliness can make or break you. A young woman I know who operates a free school for one of the business-machine manufacturers has told me in no uncertain terms what she thinks of applicants who cannot spell the names of their religions. With disgust she told me of one applicant who, in filling out the question on "Religion," tried to write "Protestant." Not sure that she had spelled it correctly, she erased all but the "P" and took a stab at "Presbyterian." No better luck there. So she made a third attempt and recorded that her religion was "Pagan." This same school head is equally annoyed when an applicant who was born in Poughkeepsie or Wequetonsing has to erase the name several times because he is unsure of the spelling. (You may have moved away from the picturesquely named town of your birth, but spelling its name correctly will be important to you from time to time as long as you live.) And your handwriting should be legible. This is important not only for the sake of ease in reading your record but, as was said earlier, because many positions require good handwriting.

**Your Legal Name.** When you print your name on an application blank be sure you have put your name there and not a nick-

name, such as "Babe." Even a diminutive of a dignified name such as James, Henry, Richard, David, Katherine, Elizabeth, or Mary is not in order. Your family and your friends may call you Dick or Molly, but those are not actually names and should never be used in print, on visiting cards, or as signatures on letters, applications, or other business papers.

To go through life saddled with a childish nickname is deplorable; but to accept the incorrect spelling of a perfectly good name and use it blindly is incomprehensible. Once, when I was interviewing a girl for a beginning file job, I noticed that her application showed her first name to be "Dorothy." I asked whether she had not made a careless mistake. "No," she replied, "that's my name. I was named for my Aunt Dorothy, but my father was excited when he signed the papers in the hospital and wrote 'Dorothy.' So, I've been 'Dorothy' ever since." I didn't hire her because I figured, if she didn't have the gumption to take her own name, she wasn't bright enough to learn filing.

You see, nicknames are not legal, regardless of how often they are used in everyday life.

Another point. Decide now, before you leave school, how you intend to sign your name. You will need to adopt an official signature and stick to it. Try your name in different ways. Then, when you have settled upon what you think is best for business use, practice writing your signature so that it can be read. When you are an executive your secretary won't have to type your name beneath it so your correspondents will know who is writing to them.

**Meticulous Accuracy.** I cannot say too firmly, "Be absolutely meticulous in filling out all application blanks." Your exactness or the lack of it may be all that stands between you and success or failure. I recall an occasion during my employment agency experience when I was looking for a young woman who had held a minor bookkeeping job and who would be able to make out orders for an import concern. Our files had not produced many likely candidates, and I was hoping that the morning callers might provide potential material. My assistant, knowing I was working to fill this particular position, brought Mary Graves to my desk. "Mrs. MacGibbon, I think possibly this is the person you are looking for," she said hopefully.

I asked Mary what her experience had been and told her to fill out an application card. Fifteen minutes later Mary and her card were ready for my further inspection. I had only to glance at the card to know that our hopes were shattered. "It will not be possible for us to recommend you for the office position I had in mind," I told her, "because of the way you have filled out the line stating what salary you received in previous positions." Mary became huffy and said, "But that's what I got." "I don't doubt that," I replied, "but don't you see anything wrong with the way you have written these figures?" No, she did not. Mary's blindness made the matter even a little worse, for here is the way she had written the information:

	Last position	Second position	First position
Salary received.....	\$ .18	\$ .16	\$ .15

Since Mary apparently did not know the difference between a dollar mark and a cent mark, she would hardly be helpful at figures in an import office or any other place.

Let us assume you have learned all there is to know about being interviewed in an employment agency and that you have made so favorable an impression on one agency that it has given you a "referral" card introducing you to an actual employer. Here is the way such a card will look:

UP-AND-COMING EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

450 Market Street

TO: Mr. David Gray, Personnel Director

FIRM: Acme Metal Products Co.

ADDRESS: 189 South Street

INTRODUCING: George Beale

FOR POSITION AS: Assistant Bookkeeper

HOOR OF APPOINTMENT: 2 P.M., March 4

SALARY: \$20 week

REFERRED BY: Margaret Jones

Usually the hour of your appointment is arranged by the agency and noted on your card, but occasionally you will be told to telephone the employer and find out what time he can see you.

## TACTFUL FIRST STEPS

In any event, you will have been given the name of the individual who is to consider you. If it is up to you to telephone him, organize yourself so as to make a favorable impression in your half of the phone conversation. Get the company and ask for the person whose name you have, or that person's secretary. An important point to remember is that often you will do better to ask for an executive's secretary and transact your business with the secretary than to be mysterious and insist on talking directly with the "higher-up." If you speak to the secretary, say something like this: "I am George Beale, and I am being sent by the Up-and-Coming Employment Agency to talk with Mr. Gray about the position of assistant bookkeeper. Can you find out what time it will be convenient for Mr. Gray to see me?" This type of approach will bring immediate results. An efficient secretary will either check then with Mr. Gray or promise to do so later and give you the information if you will call her.

Sometimes an interview is lost because an individual lacks tact in trying to make the appointment. A woman employer whose business is that of manuscript typist (work conducted from her apartment) told me of an incident in which an employment agency had highly recommended Hazel Doane. Hazel had had two years of college, was a rapid typist, and sounded like just the person this employer was looking for. However, Hazel telephoned about nine o'clock in the morning and prefaced her remarks by saying, "Did I get you up?" The employer, taken somewhat aback by this approach, replied, "No. Why?" "Oh, your voice sounded like it," came the pert retort over the wire. Although this remark was followed by a polite enough request for an interview, it is not surprising that the employer felt that any girl who would become so personal and was so thoughtless would not be a desirable employee. Consequently, she turned Hazel down without seeing her.

Armed with a card of introduction from an agency stating the time of your appointment, you are justified in calling, say, ten



minutes ahead of the hour set. It is better to be a few moments ahead of time than to run the risk of being late. Nor is there any point in letting someone else get in ahead of you or in making a wrong impression by tardiness. Your first contact with the organization will be the telephone-receptionist, who usually sits at an outer desk. Do not try to get past her or to avoid a little direct questioning there. In fact, it is a much better policy to attempt to make a friend of this young woman on your first appearance at her place of business. She can do a great deal to help you, and conversely, she often has the power to ruin your chances. Instead of being close-mouthed and grudgingly saying "I want to see Mr. Gray," it is better to say, "I have a card from the Up-and-Coming Employment Agency to be presented to Mr. Gray at two o'clock. Will you please tell him I am here and let me know when he is free?" Then seat yourself on the bench or chair provided for callers. Unless you can sit quietly without twitching or fiddling, it is well to have a newspaper or magazine to occupy you. But avoid a "scandal sheet" or a motion picture publication. You never know who is making a mental note of your literary taste at this particular moment!

#### WAITING TO GOOD ADVANTAGE

Even though you appear to be reading, it is a good idea to keep your ears open, because often you can pick up information that will prove valuable to you later. At any rate, you can gain an idea of what kind of people already work there by watching those within your line of vision or those who are passing you as they go from office to office. Sometimes you can learn what sort of firm it is by the manners of the telephone-receptionist. If she is quiet and polite in handling calls and callers, it is probable that the business is a conservative one and that it wants only top-notch employees. But if the operator is abrupt, rude, or flippant and seems to carry on endless personal chats of her own as she plugs business calls in and out and handles visitors, the chances are that the heads of the firm have not a very high standard for their

employees. If they had, they would never tolerate this presentation of their company to the public.

Keep your eye on your watch, as well as on the switchboard-receptionist. If your appointment is for two o'clock and you are not called by two or three minutes past the hour, step up to the receptionist's desk and remind her you are waiting. If she is not busy, this may be a good time to exchange a word or two with her and try to win her favor. You can begin by asking whether Mr. Gray is still tied up or whether you can see him now, since it is time for your appointment. If you smile when you speak to her, you will gain her cooperation more easily. She will then either send you to Mr. Gray or tell you he is apt to be busy for some time. You might politely suggest that you don't wish to bother her further and will wait for her to call you. Whereupon you return to your seat.

#### RECEPTIONIST MAY PASS UPON YOU

Often it is necessary to please three or more persons in an organization before you can get a job. And sometimes the first person you must impress favorably is the telephone-receptionist. There used to be a club in Chicago, I am told, where this individual was all powerful. She worked very closely with the manager, so much so that they had a signal arranged between them which went something like this: when she telephoned the boss that an applicant was waiting to talk to him, she gave her opinion of the candidate by pressing a buzzer. If she pressed three times it said, "won't do." After killing the applicant's chances, the operator waited a moment, apparently listening to the manager's instructions. Then she notified the job seeker that "the position is filled."

There is nothing anyone can do in such an extreme situation unless one is lucky enough to know in advance what to expect. Some young men in applying for work think that to kid the receptionist gets them in, and perhaps it does. Only their good judgment can tell them whether that is the method to use. But such tactics will not help a young woman applicant. All she can

do is to be pleasant and friendly, but not too much so, and hope for the best.

### THE LONG-ANTICIPATED EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW

For the purpose of instructing you in the interview itself, let us assume that you are past the operator and have been admitted to the august presence of the personnel director. Should you speak first or wait for him to recognize you and say something? If he does not look up from his work or is speaking to another person, of course you will have to wait. Beyond that it makes no difference. Perhaps the best way is for you to mention your name, "I am George Beale (or Mary Smith)." Or you say, "The Up-and-Coming Employment Agency sent me," and present your agency card. In some instances the interview will begin then and there. In others you will be told to step into the outer office and fill out an application blank. If you are asked to do this, realize that it is necessary for the records of the firm and set busily about filling out the blank similar to the one reproduced here. Do it as quickly as possible, allowing for accuracy and neatness. And be sure to sign your name!

Your references will be especially important on this application blank, so be forearmed. Be ready to list the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of five persons, not relatives, who will vouch for you. I do not need to tell you these should be persons who know you well and whose position in life is stable. Be sure you have first asked and obtained permission to use them as references. If you are a stranger in town, you will have to list names of persons to whom the firm can write. When you have finished filling out the blank, return to the personnel director and hand it to him.

**Watch Your Business Manners.** Your business manners will never be more important than at the beginning of an interview. You must positively not offer to shake hands. Only when the personnel director makes the first move will you shake hands, and that will practically never occur. Stand quietly, and wait

## APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

(ALL QUESTIONS MUST BE ANSWERED)

Wish to Apply for a Position as \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 (First choice) (Second choice) (Third choice)  
 Name (Print) (First) (Middle) (Last) Age \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 (How long at this address)

## PERSONAL HISTORY

Check (✓) whether Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed ☐ Own home ☐ Rent ☐ Live with parents ☐ Board ☐  
 No. of children \_\_\_\_\_ No. of other dependents \_\_\_\_\_

## PHYSICAL

Race \_\_\_\_\_ Height \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_ Color of Hair \_\_\_\_\_ Color Eyes \_\_\_\_\_ Hearing \_\_\_\_\_  
 Eyesight \_\_\_\_\_ Complexion \_\_\_\_\_ What is the present state of your health? \_\_\_\_\_  
 State any physical defects you may have \_\_\_\_\_

## BIRTH RECORD

I was born \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)  
 (City and State)

Mother's maiden name \_\_\_\_\_ Birthplace of mother \_\_\_\_\_  
 Birthplace of father \_\_\_\_\_ What is your ancestry? \_\_\_\_\_  
 If married, give birthplace of husband or wife \_\_\_\_\_ Can you furnish certificate of birth? \_\_\_\_\_

## NATURALIZATION (Complete the Following if Not Born in the U S A)

Date entered U S A \_\_\_\_\_ Port of entry \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of 1st papers \_\_\_\_\_ Naturalization certificate no. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date final papers \_\_\_\_\_ Name of court granting papers \_\_\_\_\_

## EDUCATION The extent and particulars of my education and training beginning with grade school are as follows

Name of school	Location	Major course	From	To	Did you graduate?
Grammar			Mo	Yr	
High school					
College					
Other					

## PERSONAL REFERENCES

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print) Name \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ (Number and street) (City and state)

GENERAL Do you have any friends or relatives in our employ? \_\_\_\_\_ If Yes list names \_\_\_\_\_ (City and state)  
 Have you previously been employed by this company? \_\_\_\_\_ (Yes or No)

Years of military service \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
 Athletic activities and hobbies in which you are interested \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of husband or wife \_\_\_\_\_  
 In emergency call \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Type of application blank used by many businesses.

**PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT:** List below a complete consecutive record of your employment for at least the past 5 years, starting with your most recent position and working backwards. *Be specific and accurate.*

Dates		Employer	Kind of business	Last position	Earnings	Reasons for leaving	Brief description of duties
From	(Mo) (Yr)	(Name)			(Start)		
To	(Mo) (Yr)	(Address)		Under Whom	(Finish)		
From	(Mo) (Yr)	(Name)			(Start)		
To	(Mo) (Yr)	(Address)		Under Whom	(Finish)		
From	(Mo) (Yr)	(Name)			(Start)		
To	(Mo) (Yr)	(Address)		Under Whom	(Finish)		

I can operate the following Office machines according to following symbols:  
(A—Expert, B—Good, C—Fair)

Calculating machine	
Typewriter	
Tabulating machine	
Duplicators	
Ditto machine	
Adding machine	
Comptometer	
Stenotype	
Mimeograph	
Key-punch machine	
IBM machine	
Other:	
PBX	
(Size of board)	
I can take dictation	words per min
I can type	words per min

Are you now employed?

(Yes or No)

If "yes" may we refer to your present employer?

What is the smallest salary you will accept?

How soon can you start work?

I hereby certify that the information indicated hereon is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of applicant

Rating by Interviewer

1 Physical qualities

2 Intelligence

3 Leadership

4 Work best suited for

Comment of interviewer.

Reverse side of business firms application blank, as reproduced on page 193.

until you are asked to be seated. In most places you will be offered a seat, but, if you are not, you should stand throughout the conversation. When you are seated, keep your hat, purse, brief case, and your hands off the interviewer's desk. This sounds like superfluous advice, but you have no idea how often it is needed. A young teacher friend of mine was looking for a new position after he had taught ten years. He suddenly discovered he had laid his hat plump on the superintendent's important papers. He had carefully put his brief case on the floor, but the hat went onto the nearest and, in this case, the worst place. He was much embarrassed when the superintendent reached for his papers. "And," as my friend said when he told me the story, "being forced to start the interview with an apology didn't help any!"

**Be Quiet, Self-contained.** When you are seated you should not cross your knees or swing a foot. No matter how nervous or frightened you are, you should not try to cover up by forced gaiety or giggling, if you are a young woman, or by boasting, if you are a young man. The know-it-all attitude does not do much for you. Neither does it help your cause to gasp out a lot of unimportant, meaningless things. To say you are out of breath from hurrying or that you have just got lost in the subway is superfluous. Remember that the less you say that is unrelated to the interview the better impression you will make and the easier the ordeal will be for you. Silence has a great power to marshal courage and poise when they seem to have deserted one. So be as quiet as you can, within and without, and reply briefly, pleasantly, and truthfully to the questions put to you.

Here's a tip for young women which I got straight from a San Francisco employer. He said, "The girl seeking employment who puts the prospective employer at ease has won half the battle." Then he told me this story to illustrate his point: "A friend of mine in San Diego sent an applicant to me with a letter of introduction and recommendation. We had for some months needed an extra stenographer but had put off getting one. The young woman had worked for my friend and had recently moved

to San Francisco with her family. I was busy the morning she came in, so instead of waiting to catch me on the fly, she said she would come back at four o'clock. She added pleasantly that if I were busy then, it wouldn't matter. Naturally I made a point not to be busy at four, and when she came she was so calm and collected that I was at ease with her at once. If she can appear so normal and unruffled in applying for a job, I am sure she knows how to handle herself on a job. In fact, she starts work for us on Monday."

Yes, this was an employer speaking. It sometimes happens that employers are not quite so much at ease in interviews as are personnel directors. This is quite natural, since the personnel director is a professional interviewer and the employer is not. So, for those of you who are nervous about interviews and find yourselves frightened when you are actually in the thick of one, just remember that not all the strain is on your side. Actually it is not an especially pleasant task to ask personal and semi-personal questions of other people. Even the professional interviewer finds it distasteful at times.

**Any Tests Will Be Simple.** One thing that causes the applicant to be nervous is the fear of being asked to take tests. The truth is that business does not use tests extensively. You will not meet so many tests in business interviews as you have been accustomed to in school or college. And for your comfort let me add that the tests given will be very simple. Few employers and relatively few personnel directors have the confidence in tests manifested in educational circles. Business tests are more apt to be performance or aptitude tests than intelligence tests. You will often be given a letter to test your dictation, transcription, and typing ability. But this is only fair, and you will, of course, acquit yourself creditably.

One employment manager I know, who gives typing tests to applicants, assures me she allows for nervousness and timidity. She says she does not expect to secure in this test the speed actually needed on the job. Employers and office managers who test applicants are more apt to evaluate the conduct of the

individual during the test than to place too much importance on the result itself. While the person giving the test may appear to be busy at an adjoining desk, he is usually watching to see how you handle yourself. If you are businesslike in assembling stationery and going about your work, you will create a good impression. But if you get flustered and start a letter a dozen times only to fill the wastebasket with spoiled stationery, you may find yourself rejected.

An employment agent in New York who places a great many young women in Wall Street positions told me that she tries to suggest ways whereby during an interview dictation test they can take time out and so gather their forces. You've all seen a football team do the same thing during a grueling game. One of her suggestions to a number of applicants she was sending out on interviews was to marshal their faculties by coughing. She said to me, "These young women can take tests perfectly well in my office, but they get jittery when a man is dictating to them and they know so much is at stake." She was a bit flabbergasted, however, to have the man to whom she had sent these applicants call her up and say, "Those girls you sent me seem to be all right, but haven't you someone who isn't about to die of tuberculosis?"

My niece, when applying to an insurance company for her first position, was given some problems in arithmetic. Fortunately she was good at mathematics and had no difficulty with the test. She got the job and found that the major part of her work was clerical, involving the figuring of simple problems.

**Tests for Character and Personality.** Sometimes, instead of being given a performance test, you are unknowingly being tested for certain character traits which business considers important. One employer I know tests a candidate's ability to mind his own business. Let me quote to you what he wrote to me about his testing method: "I have an ironclad rule that anyone applying to me for a job waits for me a moment while I leave him or her alone in my office. After a full minute I return and see whether anything on my desk has been moved or whether any effort has been made to read a 'property' paper with an intrigue-



ing title, which I keep for this exact purpose. I learned to do that in a rather costly way about a year ago."

Sometimes as part of a test you will be asked to talk with a second member of the organization. Usually this means you have succeeded in pleasing the original interviewer. However, he would like his partner or another member of the firm to pass upon you before he offers you the job. Probably the second person will not go into as detailed an interview as the first one has, but you should be ready to review your whole story. If you find that the second person does not intend to ask you questions, you may start the interview yourself. You may say something like this: "As I have just told Mr. Brown, I am a high-school graduate with a year's additional business training." From there you can go on to a brief review of what you told Mr. Brown. After you have finished you will probably be asked a few questions which you will of course answer courteously and briefly. I call this duplicate interview a test only because its purpose is largely to put over your personality and ability. The first interviewer usually only wants his own judgment backed up or to assure himself that you will be as acceptable to other members of the organization as you are to him. This is especially true in a small firm where a limited staff works closely together.

**Ideas to the Fore.** You have heard it said and truly that "ideas get the job." Your objective in each interview should be to show that you are a person with ideas (if you really are). This does not mean that you will try to get your first job by going to a firm and telling how it can make more money. Such a procedure would be resented. Also, in all probability your idea would not be helpful since you could not possibly know enough about the business yet to make a sound suggestion about marketing, advertising, or general policy.

But even though you are a beginner, you can still take many ideas with you to the interview, and one of them may land the job for you. Suppose you are going to be interviewed by a firm which, you find upon investigation, makes an advertised product called Sunshine soap. If you have a day or even a few hours before

the interview, buy a cake of the soap and try it out. In addition to testing the product yourself, shop for it in some department store or perhaps a drugstore. Find out from the salespeople how well it sells in comparison with other toilet soaps at the same price. You can check up and see whether it is also sold in grocery stores or in the five- and ten-cent stores and, if so, in what size cakes and at what prices. Perhaps in your rounds you will hear someone ask for the soap at a counter, or perhaps when you ask for it a salesman will tell you they don't carry it, and why. You may not be able to use any of this information, but your research will serve you as a backlog during the interview.

It is always possible that if you have some ideas about the product or service put out by the firm interviewing you, there will be an opportunity for you to show that you have brains and have been using them in connection with the anticipated interview. For instance, you may know of a new way in which Sunshine soap is being used. At the close of the interview you might have a chance to say, truthfully, "I've always been interested in Sunshine soap. At home we like it especially as a shampoo—cut up and dissolved in boiling water. Mother says nothing makes our hair so clean or brings out so many high lights." Any idea like that, suggesting a new use for a product or showing that you see the sales side, will help you to appear more than just a maker of pothooks and a pounder of typewriter keys—a person with helpful hands and an alert brain.

**When It's Time to Go—Go!** Many applicants talk themselves into a job, then stay and talk themselves out of it. There is an art in knowing when to leave, and when to leave well enough alone. You should listen carefully and sense when the interview is over. This is not hard to do. If the person to whom you are talking seems to run out of questions or begins to fidget with papers on his desk, it is evident your time is up or that you may even have stayed a minute too long. If he draws out a watch, you should rise to your feet, because it is now certain that he wants you to go. When an applicant will not leave, even after the air has become thick with hints, the situation grows very

embarrassing for the interviewer, and he may put out the offender—perhaps none too politely.

A friend of mine needed a typist to get out a club annual report and asked me to help her with the interviewing. As my friend had only her living room in which to receive them, the applicants who were waiting were present during the interviews ahead of them. This is always unfortunate, and in this case it was extremely difficult because none of them had the sense to go after her interview was over. Out of the five or six young women we talked to, only one left under her own steam. When we had asked all the questions either of us cared to put to the applicants and had practically eliminated them one by one, they still hung around and wanted to tell more about themselves. Either my friend or I had to say each time, "You have told us all that is necessary and if we decide upon you we will let you know." In several instances this was not sufficient, and one of us had to rise, thank the young woman for coming, and say, "Good-by. You will hear from us if we want you." How can an employer feel that an applicant will be a worth-while addition to his office force if he or she lacks judgment in such an important thing as knowing when to go? There will be many times on the job when a graceful exit is essential to the situation.

So when you feel the interview is over, terminate the conversation quickly but pleasantly. Go at once—not by slow degrees. You have already had your share of a very busy person's time. Rise from your chair, thank your interviewer, say "Good-by," and depart. If the position has not been offered to you, you can perhaps find out whether you are being favorably considered by asking a question just before you say good-by. "May I expect to hear from you when you have made your decision?" is a good exit line. Or you might say, "Would it be agreeable to you if I telephone you in a few days to see what you have decided?" These are little tricks which a good salesman uses to "keep the door open," as he says. Again, as you leave do not shake hands unless the other person extends his hand. The situation is scarcely less formal than when you arrived, fifteen minutes

earlier. You may feel that because you have told your life story you are now well acquainted, but such is not the case. To him you are merely part of the day's work, and to get chummy at this stage will not better your cause. The chances are he will see no reason to shake hands with you. So just say "Good-by," and walk out of the room quickly and quietly. If the interviewer closes your talk with him, he will probably say: "We are interviewing several people for this position and will not decide until we have talked with others. I have your name and address here and will let you know." If you have been sent on the interview by an agency, the employer will communicate with you through them. In that case you can depart on a "thank you" note and add that you will keep in touch with the employment agency. You should, of course, always report back to an agency on the result of an interview that has been arranged for you.

#### CALLING WITHOUT AN INTRODUCTION

We assume that the interview we have been discussing was arranged through an employment agency. Or it might have been done by a friend or relative. You might even have made the appointment yourself through hearing of a vacancy and telephoning to the proper person. But there is another kind of interview that is far more difficult. Everything I have said about interviews in employment agencies and with employers or their representatives will apply equally to this type of interview. But it has pitfalls of its own for which you must be prepared.

You will remember that in lining up leads for interviews you made a list of firms that took beginners, or for which you would especially like to work. You got information about these businesses by looking them up in the library and elsewhere. Then you listed this on cards in your index file. Like a good salesman you routed each card by neighborhood and planned your calls accordingly. So far we have done nothing about this list, which you prepared so carefully. Yet it is a very important one, possibly a valuable source of interviews and perhaps of employment. However, until you begin making some calls on these prospects,

you do not know how live they are or whether they are any good at all. But since you have no letter or card of introduction to ease you in, you must take special pains in approaching these important business organizations.

My suggestion is that you proceed gingerly. Try out a few and at the same time try out your own technique in "calling cold." This expression means calling without a letter or card to get you in and perhaps not too much information about what you will find when you do get in. "Calling cold" is apt to mean "ringing door bells," and you are not going to do that. This prospect file of yours is not actually a stone-cold list. You have made it at least lukewarm by the work you did in finding out what you could about the firms you have listed.

**Good Days and Bad.** There are a few general rules to remember in calling on a firm to which you haven't been introduced. Never call on Saturday. This is usually a half day and the few executives who are in during the morning are cleaning up the week's work and getting ready to leave for the week end. Monday is almost as bad a time to call. Two days' mail has accumulated, and a lot of odds and ends have to be cleared away in order to get the week started. Psychologically too, Monday is a poor day. People are not yet wound up to the business tempo, and the week end has yet to be recovered from, in some instances. Another mistake frequently made is to call too early in the morning. Executives have mail to go over and instructions to issue for the day, and callers get in the way of these matters. Between eleven and twelve in the morning is probably the best time to call. Important executives usually return from lunch at two or later, and so between three and four or even shortly after four seems to be the best afternoon hour to present yourself for an interview.

**Ask for the Right Person.** The next most important thing is to get to the right person. In an earlier chapter it was suggested that wherever possible you get the name of the person who does the employing in each organization you plan to visit. Sometimes this is the employment manager; again it is the personnel director.

Sometimes the office manager handles all interviews, and in a smaller business the head of the firm himself or one of his close associates sees applicants. If you have been able to find out the name of this person in advance, the procedure will be much simpler. You will merely present yourself at the receptionist's desk or, if there is none, to the telephone operator. You will say you would like to see Mr. Green, and when you are asked what your business is you will reply that you wish to speak to him about employment. There is no use in being evasive or trying to put over your call as "personal." I have known callers to be thrown out bodily when they used this method of getting into an executive's office. Moreover, it so smacks of insurance selling that the "personal" approach rarely accomplishes anything these days. However, when you mention employment, the receptionist may say to you, "We're not taking on anyone just now." And then what do you do?

**Secretaries Can Help You.** One way to avoid this is to ask for Mr. Green's secretary. As I said in an earlier chapter, the best approach to an executive is through his secretary. She is the buffer between her boss and the many people who would take his time needlessly, so she sees all those who call on him without appointments. You may have to wait for her, but eventually she will come to you. Of course you rise when she greets you and asks your business. You can tell her pleasantly that you understand Mr. Green handles employment in this firm, and you would like to see him now if it is convenient or to make an appointment for an interview. If the secretary stops you with, "We are not taking anyone on just now," you can say to her, "That's all right. But if Mr. Green would be willing to see me, I should like to be interviewed so that I may be considered when the next vacancy in my type of work occurs." Often a secretary can and will consult her chief or look at his appointment book and set a time for you to call upon him. Failing this, she may say, "I'll see what I can do for you. Call me up tomorrow." You have no idea what a help such an accommodating secretary can be to you, if she happens to like you.

In case you cannot get to see Mr. Green and you know he is the only person who interviews employees, the next best thing you can do, and what you will probably be asked to do, is to fill out an application blank. I cannot encourage you to put much faith in the efficacy of an application blank filed under such circumstances, but often there is nothing else for you to do.

When the person you are asking for is the personnel director or the employment manager, he will usually see you whether there is work in the offing or not. It is his job to be constantly on the lookout for desirable employees, and he is interested in keeping an active file of better class applicants in order to have good material to draw on when needed. Executives who take on interviewing along with other work are not so easy to see. Unless they are seeking to fill certain positions they rarely have the time to talk to applicants who "call cold."

**Be Direct with Receptionist.** If it has been impossible for you to find out who is in charge of the employment interviewing in a firm you wish to contact, all you can do is call and hope you can get your needed information at the front desk. Do not tell your story to the janitor or the first person you meet in the hall. Many an applicant has been "kissed off" by someone who has nothing to do with issuing jobs, when if he had reached the right person he might have had a satisfactory interview. Go straight to the receptionist and ask her to tell you who handles employment. Such a direct question calls for a direct reply, and usually you will get it. Suppose she says that Mr. Smith takes care of employment. Your next question is, "May I see Mr. Smith?" Should that be impossible you can ask for Mr. Smith's secretary and proceed as on the call when you asked for Mr. Green's secretary. After all, this is a very simple way to get to the person you want to see. The important thing is not to be sidetracked to someone who has nothing to do with hiring.

**Introduce Yourself.** Because you may not be asked to fill out an application blank, you will probably have to start the interview by introducing yourself. Since you do not know what positions are open, you can then ask if there are any vacancies

in typing, a combination of bookkeeping and stenography, or whatever it is you want to do.

By all means be very businesslike. This is especially important in an interview that you have secured by your own initiative. Remember, your only excuse for being received at all is that you have certain skills and abilities that this business might be able to use. To begin talking about the weather or to make conversation would be in very poor taste and would make you appear to be without poise or judgment. The thing to do is to come straight to the point and as quickly as possible interest your vis-à-vis in what you can do. Of course now, as in any interview, you will not linger a second beyond the psychological moment for leaving.

### LANDING THE JOB

A good salesman tries to get his prospect to "sign on the dotted line." In other words, he tries to make a sale. You, too, must try to make a sale in every interview. This does *not* mean you should use high-pressure methods. It means that you should present yourself as favorably as possible—your manners, your appearance, and your abilities. Your expression should be bright, alert, and interested. You should speak distinctly but not too loudly. Looking glum and mumbling out of sheer awkwardness and fright, as you have seen some of your schoolmates recite in class, never landed a job for anyone!

Seldom does an applicant land a job in a first interview with any business firm. If you should be so fortunate you will, of course, ask when they wish you to come to work. If you are not told to whom you are to report to work and at what time, you should ask. However, these happy details need little preparation—they are not easily overlooked or forgotten!

**Recognize Unprofitable Interviews.** There are times when something is brought out about the position during an interview which convinces you the job is not for you. In such a case there is no need to carry on, bravely answering questions about yourself and your ability and taking up further time of the person



interviewing you. However, you must be careful not to refuse a job that has not been offered to you. It is difficult to tell you exactly what to say under such circumstances. You will have to be guided by the situation as it develops and meet it as gracefully as you can. If you feel a position requires more experience than you have had or skills that are not your best, you might honestly say so. If you are being interviewed by a personnel director who has other positions to fill, this need not necessarily injure your future chances with this organization.

**Don't Think Out Loud.** One fatal error in applying for a job is to expatiate on its disadvantages during the interview. One girl I know talked herself out of a job by saying, "This would be a long way for me to come every day. You see I live quite far out. The fare would be so much I don't think it would pay me to take the job. Still, I suppose if nothing better turns up, I could try it and see how it works out."

The distance and the carfare involved are probably legitimate reasons for questioning the desirability of the position. But keep such things to yourself. After you have secured the job, you can ignore such difficulties or overcome them, as you see fit. Such objections, given voice to, make an astute employer feel that you will never really be contented in the job and he is likely to agree that this is no position for you.

If, for expediency's sake, you take a position that is not what you had in mind, as many have had to do, don't belittle the job. Such remarks as, "If nothing better comes up," or "I'll try it for a while," start you off with two strikes against you. They might even lose the job for you. Companies, large and small, want employees who are interested in their jobs and who will stay a reasonable length of time. They cannot afford to be a training ground for transient youth.

**Recognize a Polite "Turn Down."** Do not take too seriously those famous last words, "We'll put your application on file and let you know when something turns up." This is usually a way of getting rid of you. If you wait for some firms to call you back, you will wait a long time—probably forever. Some places you

call will prove such poor prospects that you will cross them off your list immediately. Others, on analysis, will seem to be good or fair. These you should keep warm by calling again or by keeping them alive through occasional telephone calls or letters. Just continuing to make first calls is not nearly so good a plan as assembling a live list of prospects and keeping after them. It is much better to follow up your application in, say, twenty good firms that regularly employ people in the kind of work you can do than to run all over the town making calls on hundreds of concerns which by no stretch of the imagination would be likely to need you or to call you back.

### **CHECK THE DAY'S WORK**

At the end of each day write on your prospect cards the results of the calls you have made. You cannot possibly remember what has been said, so before the calls have grown cold get the records on to your cards. If you can make a note right after each call, you will have a more accurate record. In those places where you feel you have made a favorable impression and you know there is a job, it will do no harm to write a follow-up letter the next day. Thank the interviewer for the courtesy of the interview and state briefly that you still hope to hear favorably from him. A sample letter of this sort is reproduced in the next chapter.

### **USE A TICKLER FILE FOR FOLLOW-UPS**

Your live cards should go into a "tickler" file where they will come up on whatever date you plan. From five days to a week or even two weeks are good periods to decide upon. An application is said to get very cold by the end of a week, and there is nothing to keep it alive but your own efforts. If you feel that the interviewer will remember you favorably, you can telephone occasionally. This will remind him of your existence and perhaps lead to information as to whether the job you applied for is still open or whether there is another position you might fill. Under such circumstances, it is desirable to make another call.

On a second call do not sit down unless you are asked to do so. After all, you covered the ground quite fully on your first call and you are here only to keep that ground well plowed up. All you need to do is to remind the employer or personnel director you are still interested in anything that may develop there.

Brevity is your cue in all your follow-up calls. Whether you telephone, write, or call in person, your purpose is merely to see you are not forgotten. Other people are calling daily, and you will be lost sight of unless you "keep your memory green." So do all the follow-up work you can short of becoming a nuisance. Don't waste time following up on concerns you have reason to think are unstable financially or which frankly tell you they have not put anyone on for the last six months. And of course, you will not have to be told not to call again where you feel they are antagonistic toward you. You alone can tell when you have made a good impression, perhaps even made a friend, and where you are apt to be considered as promising material.

#### IT TAKES ALL KINDS TO MAKE A WORLD

A chapter on interviewing would not be complete without a look at some of the personalities you will meet while you are job seeking. Your success is as dependent on the person to whom you talk as upon your own efforts. There are cooperative, friendly interviewers who will help to bring out the very best there is in you. These you will leave feeling you are really quite a person yourself!

Then there are cold, formal individuals who are apparently too busy to take time to find out what sort of person you are. These will make you miserable, if you let them. Although you may have been sent to them with the certain knowledge that there is a position available, they may appear to regard your call as an intrusion. They may even appear so indifferent that at the end of the interview you feel you have done very badly by yourself.

But this type is as nothing to the occasional man who says nothing, scowls at you, and forces you to do all the talking. Even experienced employees are put to rout by such an inter-

viewer. Out of sheer embarrassment the impulse is to talk, say anything, just to avoid the appalling silence with which he fills the room! One young man I know met such a personnel director in a large radio corporation. After stating his errand, the young man waited courteously. Nothing happened. "Mr. Hazlitt told me I could use him as a reference," he added hopefully. Still silence. "I haven't known Mr. Hazlitt long," he plunged on. "In fact, I only met him yesterday when I knew I was going to see you. Mr. Hazlitt said that he had done you a great many favors and it was about time you did one for him." This bright remark did evoke a hollow laugh, but the poor lad was so chagrined at his own tactless stupidity that he made a hasty exit, never to return. This was probably what the personnel director intended!

Fortunately the grouches and the frozen faces are rare among personnel directors. When you meet them you will have to marshal your forces and be as patient and courteous as you can. Timidity is usually meat to their egos, and if you can muster the appearance, at least, of unfrightened composure, you have spiked their guns and perhaps won their approval. Actually most persons entrusted with the securing of employees are understanding, conscientious men and women who do their best to give the applicant every chance. Part of their business is to draw him out in order to discover whether he is employable.

Young women sometimes complain of a "smart aleck" who kids them, gets personal, and finally ends up by pinching them in the ribs as they are about to depart. This man is more apt to be an employer. Dignity is one of the first qualifications of a personnel director, and he could not hold his job long were his conduct so unbecoming. But such a businessman is exceptional, and surely he is his own best argument against accepting a position in his organization.

#### REGARDING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Before we leave this chapter I must answer the question which those of you who have worked are framing, "How valuable are

letters of recommendation in landing a job?" Not so valuable as applicants think.

Employers and personnel directors know all too well that almost any employer, when cornered, will say something good about even a dismissed employee, so they are inclined to discount those high-sounding letters that you copied so carefully. If you have had enough experience to obtain letters of recommendation, carry them with you, but don't depend on them too much. Above all, don't think they will save the day for you. An applicant who sits like a bump on a log expecting an employer to wade through a bunch of letters is not handling himself well.

The important thing is to deserve a recommendation. You don't really need a letter. Ask your employer's permission to use his name as a reference, and then merely list it on the application blank, giving his telephone number. You may be sure your prospective employer, if interested, will telephone him. Among the fraternity of employers, it is generally understood that over the telephone one comes nearer getting the truth about an ex-employee than in a formal letter of recommendation. Most persons will hesitate to write that a former stenographer was uncooperative, for example, but on the telephone this can be discussed more frankly.

### CROSS-EXAMINE YOURSELF

All interviews are valuable experience. At the end of each day, analyze your calls and review your mistakes as well as your successes. Ask yourself, "Why did I reply as I did to the question about my preference for bookkeeping work? Did I say the right thing? Would it have been better if I had handled it differently?" Did you feel awkward in a certain interview? Go back to your rehearsing and see if you cannot do better now. If a brand-new question was sprung on you and you feel you did not do credit to yourself in answering it, work up a better answer and be ready with it the next time. We all learn by our disappointments and mistakes, so do not be discouraged, no matter how poorly you feel you have managed your first few interviews.

**You can perfect your technique only by practice. As you review your experiences, you will find you can sift the chaff from the wheat. You will learn to distinguish your poor approaches and discard them. By the same token, you will recognize your improvements and use them more skillfully. Then, one fine day, your perfected interview will land you a job!**

### **QUESTIONS**

**1. Why is it important to make a favorable impression upon employment agencies?**

**2. If there are questions on an application blank which you do not understand, will you**

**a. Take time to study them more carefully?**

**b. Interrupt an interviewer and ask that these be explained?**

**c. Omit answering these questions?**

**3. Why is it necessary to have their permission before you give as references the names of older people who know you?**

**4. What is wrong with giving relatives as references? They know you better than anyone else does.**

**5. If your handwriting is not very legible, should you print your answers on the application blank?**

**6. Name the advantage, if any, of having with you a typed statement of your personal and educational record. If you have worked, should you have these employment data in your mind, or typed for more prompt reference?**

**7. Would you feel more at ease in an interview if you have memorized a stereotyped speech? Would you make a better or a worse impression?**

**8. Why is it as important to make a good exit from an interview as to make a good entrance?**

**9. What are the best hours to call, if you are going to do so without an introduction?**

**10. What other persons, besides the one who interviews you, is it often necessary for you to "sell"?**

**11. Is the approach, "I would like to file an application," a good way to introduce yourself when you call without an appointment or without knowing who handles the employment?**

**12. When you know the name of the person who is interviewing you would it be advisable to call him by name during the conversation?**

13. If you are a smoker and during the interview the person with whom you are talking offers you a cigarette, would you

- a. Refuse, without explanation?
- b. Say, "Thank you. I don't smoke during business hours"?
- c. Accept the cigarette and smoke with the interviewer?

14. In case you are a gum chewer, would you have gum in your mouth when you go to be interviewed?

15. Should you sit down and begin taking off your wraps, if the interviewer has not asked you to do so?

16. If you have a temporary job and can go on interviews only after business hours, should you try to force an employment agency or an employer to make an appointment to see you at noon or on Saturday afternoon?

### CRITICIZE THESE STATEMENTS

1. It makes no difference whether you arrive on time for an interviewing appointment, provided you explain politely why you were late.

2. If you think the interviewer is not going to consider you favorably you should stay right there and talk to him until you convince him he should give you the job.

3. After you have worked hard for a week and have been interviewed several times, if you haven't got a job you might as well stop trying.

4. When you ask for an important person and cannot see him, refuse to see his secretary.

5. Tell a receptionist "where to get off," if she tries to find out what your business is.

6. Don't bother to be businesslike. It is more important to be charming in an interview and interest the person in *you* rather than in what you can do.

7. While you are being interviewed, if details about the job reveal to you that it is nothing you would like, you should rise and say, "I'm not interested in the position."

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the importance of conforming with the requirements when filling out an application blank.

2. When you have filled out an application blank in an employment agency and they send you to be interviewed by a business firm, why should you be asked to fill out another?

3. A personnel director says she gives typing and stenographic tests to applicants, not always because she feels it necessary but because she wants to see how they act under strain. Explain why the ability to stand strain is important in certain types of office work.

4. Discuss why you are told, "Don't boast, or have a know-it-all attitude during an interview." What is wrong with being funny, chummy, cocky, or coy?

5. Upon entering an interviewer's presence is it better to say, "I am Miss Smith," or "I am Jane Smith"? If the latter is in better form, does the same rule apply when the applicant is Robert Smith?

6. Since it is the custom for men to shake hands when they are introduced, why should not Robert Smith, when calling upon a male interviewer, offer to shake hands?

7. Discuss whether saying, "Oh well, there just aren't any jobs; I'll wait until things pick up," is a defeatist attitude or good common sense.

8. If you are anxious to find a five-day-week job, should you explain this to the interviewer and see whether you can be accommodated? Do you think stating your wishes would interfere with the consideration given your application?

9. Why are personnel directors unanimous in saying, "Don't take anyone else with you when you go job hunting"?

10. If you were kept waiting an interminable time for an interview, when you had an appointment, would you

- a. Tell them what you think of them for making you wait?
- b. Say nothing, and wait?
- c. Get huffy and walk out, saying your time is valuable, too?
- d. Keep after the telephone-receptionist to see whether she can't get you in?

If you say nothing, are you being servile?

11. If, when you enter an interviewer's private office, you see she is busy on the telephone, should you

- a. Go in and sit down?
- b. Withdraw and wait outside until you are called?
- c. Stay, listen to the conversation, and start your remarks by commenting on what was said?
- d. Interrupt and force her to notice you?



12. Should you feel encouraged when an interviewer says, "We'll call you when something comes up"? Should you be equally encouraged when he says, "We'll place your application on file"? Under either circumstance, should you cease opening up other leads and wait at home to hear from these employers?

13. If you think an interviewer is not asking questions that put you in your best light, is it a good plan to take the interview into your own hands and give him a sales talk?

14. Let us suppose that an interviewer in turning you down takes the time to explain why you are unsuited for the position. Would you appreciate this interest, or would you resent it?

15. If an interviewer asks you how many times you are out until midnight during the week, and you are actually out late every night, will you

- a. Lie, and say you always go to bed early?
- b. Tell the truth, because it is none of his business?
- c. Beat about the bush?

16. The following have aptly been called the "seven points of departure":

- a. Stand up
- b. Hold out your hand
- c. Say good-by
- d. Go to the door
- e. Open the door
- f. Walk out
- g. Walk away

Do all of these apply to an exit from an employment interview? If not, which would you omit, and why?

17. After an interview with a firm that has no jobs open now, you are asked to call again. How soon would you call back? How often would you call? How would you introduce yourself each time? Could some of the follow-up be done on the telephone? How many calls would you make before you took this name out of your prospect file, as "dead"?

## PROJECTS

1. Type copies of the agency and the business firm application blanks reproduced in this chapter and fill in your answers to all the questions.

Bring the filled-out forms to class and be prepared to explain why you answered the questions as you did.

2. Assume that you have been interviewed by an employer who finally says: "All right. I think I know all I need to about your qualifications." What is your next move? Write out in the proper sequence just what you will say and do from then on until you are outside the door.

3. The following have been listed as the obstacles that probably do most to prevent graduates from securing positions:

- a. Poor appearance
- b. Fear
- c. Lack of a plan
- d. Lack of experience

Write a 1,000-word paper stating how you would overcome each of these in presenting yourself in an interview.

4. You have been told by an employment agency to call up the Acme Plating Company and make an appointment to be interviewed by Mr. James Purvis, the office manager. The position open is a stenographic one. Write out just what you would say in the telephone conversation, first with the PBX operator, then with Mr. Purvis's secretary, and finally with Mr. Purvis.

5. Write your name in every way you can think of, in order to arrive at what will be the best possible business signature for you to use from now on. Bring these to class marked 1, 2, and 3 in the order of your preference and be ready to give the reasons for your first choice.

6. How would you proceed to analyze a recently concluded interview? Write down the points on which you would check yourself as having said or done the *right* or the *wrong* thing. What benefit will you derive from carefully reviewing each interview?

## CHAPTER IX

### WRITING LETTERS OF APPLICATION

"Is it better to apply for a position personally or by letter?" This question turns up frequently in my mail and following my lectures. There is only one answer. A personal interview is always more desirable than a letter of application. But there are times and circumstances when a letter may be the means of obtaining an interview. Indeed the writing of letters to prospective employers might well have been included in Chapter V as one of the ways to secure interviews. By the same token, it is a waste of time to apply for a position by letter unless you can follow it up with a personal call. For no matter how excellent your letter, no employer is going to hire you sight unseen.

We are talking about the average office job, of course, not about the specialist's job. For instance, before the war some foreign governments imported many American engineers and aviators. Obviously, personal interviews were impossible. Occasionally the same situation holds true in distant parts of our country. But I assure you that even in such cases the employer in search of a specialist will make some arrangement to have likely applicants looked over and their records investigated before a contract is signed.

#### LETTERS DON'T LAND JOBS

Many young business-school graduates and even some experienced office people imagine letters of application can land jobs. I've known young people just out of school to send out job-seeking letters in all directions, confidently expecting offers of positions to result. One young woman I talked to in New York had been out of business school nine months and was still unemployed.

"What have you done?" I asked.

"I've written letters—hundreds of them—to all the big firms," she answered.

One or two companies had replied in routine fashion, saying they had nothing just then but to "drop in some time." The rest of them had not bothered to answer. Since large business organizations receive hundreds of such communications each month, only an exceptional letter of application will attract attention. The proper way to approach such firms is in person, through their personnel departments whose sole business is the sorting and selecting of employable people.

### LETTERS THAT GOT INTERVIEWS

So don't waste your time and your stationery on ill-considered letters of application. When you do write such letters, regard them as a step toward interviews. The head of a Chicago business school told me to what good advantage some of his graduates used letters leading to interviews.

"In the depth of the depression," he said, "when jobs were scarce and not coming into our placement bureau, I offered to pay the postage for any student who wished to launch a letter campaign. Some graduates sent out a few letters, hit or miss, and when nothing happened grew discouraged and quit. But one young woman wrote 300 letters to a carefully selected list. In reply she received seven or eight telephone calls and, following interviews, had three jobs offered her. Another girl, who wanted to work in a travel bureau, concentrated on writing to companies in that field. Having traveled extensively, she had a great deal to offer besides her knowledge of shorthand and typing. Her perfectly written letters and her travel experience led to interviews and a good job for her."

These cases are excellent examples of the intelligent use of letters as a possible introduction to prospective employers. Very different from aimless canvassing by mail!

### WHY ARE YOU LAUNCHING A LETTER CAMPAIGN?

But before you embark upon an extensive letter-writing campaign in lieu of personal appearances, ask yourself a few questions:

Are you seeking refuge behind your typewriter because you are too timid to beard the lion in his den?

Do you really want a job?

Are you merely making a big show of activity because your parents insist upon it?

#### WHEN TO APPLY BY LETTER

Here are five occasions for applying for a position by letter:

1. In answer to advertisements
2. To a selected list of firms
3. To firms which you hear have openings you could fill
4. To a small list in a business field for which you are especially qualified
5. To business people who know your family or who know of you

In every case your letter should ask for a personal interview. Keep this in mind. It will help you to write letters that stick to the point.

Later we shall discuss the writing of good letters of application and I shall give you a few sample letters to study. For the moment, let us assume you know how to write an acceptable letter of this sort and that you need only a few hints as to the specific pointing of letters in each of the classifications enumerated above.

**In Answer to Advertisements.** In Chapter V, the matter of answering advertisements was discussed in detail, but largely from the point of view of applying in person when an address was given. Now we will assume that the advertisement gives only a box number and requires a letter of application. Remember that the firm advertising will receive scores of replies, possibly hundreds, and that these will be sorted first on the basis of appearance and second on content. You will be called for an interview only if your letter ranks among the top 5 to 10 per cent. Therefore it must be good.

Perhaps the most important point to keep in mind when answering an advertisement by letter is to cover all the requirements mentioned. Here is a typical advertisement:

STENOGRAPHER—22 to 28 years—casualty insurance experience preferred. In answer give education, experience and salary desired. Y 120—Daily News.

A certain kind of experience is suggested but not specified as essential. However, an experienced stenographer is definitely wanted; therefore if you have had no experience it would be a mistake to answer this advertisement. One reason many young people never hear from their letters is that they apply for positions for which they are not qualified. In this advertisement three other items are listed: age, education, and salary expected. In replying you must not fail to give information on all three of these points besides stating your experience.

In composing letters in response to advertisements, be sure always to write out the word "advertisement." Never use the abbreviation "ad." To write "add" would further convict you of being an ignoramus, there being no such abbreviation. If you are answering an advertisement in which only a box number is given, you should put this number in your letter in the same position you would ordinarily place the firm name, as

No. X-191  
Toledo *Examiner*  
Toledo, Ohio

In the opening sentence, your letter should formally apply for the position advertised. You might begin it in one of the following ways:

In reply to your advertisement in the *Sunday Telegram*, I am submitting my qualifications for your consideration.

I would like to apply for the position of stenographer which you advertised in today's *Tribune*.

This is my application for the position of junior bookkeeper which you advertised in the *Chronicle* of March 19.

The remainder of the letter would follow the general rules which will be covered later in this chapter.

**To a Selected List of Employing Firms.** You will recall discussing the assembling of leads for interviews, in Chapter V.

It was suggested that you start a card index file of firms who frequently employ beginners in your chosen type of work. The next step was to gather all the information you could about these companies, and later we considered how you might call upon them "cold" with the hope of being interviewed. It is such a list as this that I have in mind for this classification, a list of organizations you have looked up and know something about and which you have taken pains to satisfy yourself are reputable firms for which you would be fortunate to work. In the letter you write you must put your best foot forward. It is like the smile you give a stranger when asking a favor. For your letter is unsolicited, and, by means of your typewriter, you must interest the personnel department in your wish to be interviewed.

Your letter should be addressed to the firm itself, as is the usual business letter. If you have been able to get the name of the person who does the employing, you should mark the letter for his attention, as

Newell & French Company  
1751 Ford Avenue  
Detroit, Michigan  
Attention Mr. John Davis, Personnel Director

Gentlemen:

Possible opening paragraphs for such a letter might be:

If you are considering any changes in, or additions to, your stenographic force, I should appreciate the courtesy of an interview.

In the opening of your new offices you may wish to increase your personnel, and I should like to offer my services as general clerk or assistant bookkeeper.

I should appreciate an opportunity to call and discuss with you my qualifications as typist and dictating-machine operator, in order that I may be registered with you in case of future openings in this line of work.

This is the most general of our five classifications, and it will be the most difficult from which to get results. Let me warn

**you**, that if you are to receive a reply to these letters, your application will have to be superexcellent in form, neatness, and content. After the opening, you should frame the letter according to one of the three types suggested later.

**To Firms You Hear Have a Vacancy You Could Fill.** By keeping your ear to the ground you may hear of vacancies about to occur or already existing. If you want the job, get a letter off at once. As always, try to ascertain the name of the person who will select the new employee and address your letter to the firm, marked for his attention. When you have not been told confidentially about the opening, mention the source of your information. Here are pattern opening sentences for such a letter:

Miss Jones, of your Credit Department, tells me that you have asked her to secure the names of available typists for a possible vacancy. I wish to be considered for the position

I have been told you expect to add several clerks to your filing department. If my information is correct, I should like to be considered an applicant. I am an experienced file clerk.

Mr. Albert Edwards, personnel manager of Brown-Jones & Company, has told me you wish to secure the names of several applicants for the position of bookkeeper-stenographer. After you have looked over my qualifications, listed on the enclosed personal data sheet, I hope you will grant me an interview.

**To a Field for Which You Are Especially Qualified.** Perhaps you have something special to offer, like the Chicago girl whose traveling experiences fitted her for a position in a travel bureau. If so, a letter can be a great help in bringing your qualifications to the attention of an employer in your special field. Possibly your family owns a store, and in vacations you have sold behind the counter or taken a hand in buying certain lines of merchandise. Or possibly you have a flair for fashion. You have a right to assume these experiences and interests might make you valuable in the office of a department store or in a buying exchange. Or, if you are a stenographer who has studied nursing, you would be especially well fitted for work in a doctor's office.



The introductory sentence of your letter should call attention to any such plus values in your equipment for business. Since I cannot know what your special experience may have been, I shall have to leave the composition of the opening of this letter to you.

**To Business People Who Know of You.** Refer again to Chapter V and our discussion of the value of friends and acquaintances as a possible means of securing interviews.

Letters sent to the names on this hand-picked list should be more personal in tone than those in the four previous classifications. Even though you have not personally met those to whom you are writing, the assumption is that, since they know your family or who you are, they will take some interest in you as an individual. For instance, graduates of a private business school in St. Louis have been most successful in securing positions "back home" by writing to bankers, lawyers, and other prominent citizens who knew their parents and, in some instances, the writers of the letters. The stunt of writing from the big city proved sufficiently intriguing to produce interviews for the applicants.

In using this type of list, you should write directly to the individual, not to his firm, giving his business title and addressing him as follows:

Mr. George Evans, President  
Central Bank  
244 Parkside Row  
Rochester 10, New York

Dear Mr. Evans:

Your introductory paragraph should be friendly and rather informal. I suggest:

You may not remember me, but I am the daughter of David Hamilton, and my father has often spoken of you to me. Father may have told you that following two years at college, I came to New York for a thorough business course in the Blank Business School. I shall graduate in another month

and hope to go home to work. May I call upon you some day soon to discuss the possibility of a position in your bank, either as a typist or a stenographer?

or

My cousin, James Elwood, says he has spoken to you about me as a possible employee in the business office of your organization. I shall greatly appreciate an appointment to call upon you and discuss this matter in person. I need not tell you that I should consider myself most fortunate to work for your company, and especially under your supervision.

### STATE YOUR CASE SIMPLY AND IN PROPER FORM

I am continually surprised at the lack of knowledge among applicants of what constitutes a good business letter. Though self-expression, especially on paper, is more difficult for some people than for others, it would seem that it ought to be possible to state one's case in simple declarative sentences when applying for a position. But, alas, the average letter received by business organizations from would-be employees refutes any such supposition!

As I write, I have before me several hundred letters that have been given to me by business friends from their application files. Would that it were possible to reproduce here a representative group to back up my statements concerning the total inadequacy of so many applications! The letters are written on all sorts of paper, often on daintily tinted social stationery, occasionally penciled on ruled paper torn from a school tablet. Even when standard-sized business paper has been used, the applicant has often covered both sides. Many letters are entirely devoid of margins. At least 50 per cent of the handwritten letters are illegible. Among this motley lot, a letter that is neat and well arranged stands out like a beacon!

It should not be necessary to tell business students that letters of application, like all business letters, should be written on plain white paper, regulation size (8½ by 11 inches). The excuse, "I saw the ad in the newspaper, and the only stationery in the house was notepaper," won't stand up. Anyone who is job hunt-

ing should have the proper businesslike equipment at hand and be ready to get out a letter at a moment's notice. If you do not wish to invest in heavy white bond paper by the box, the nearest five- and ten-cent store will provide the few necessary sheets and envelopes in the proper size.

### **YOUR LETTER IS A SAMPLE OF YOUR WORK**

There is some difference of opinion as to whether letters of application should be written by hand or on a typewriter. As was explained in an earlier chapter, legible handwriting is an asset in many office positions, especially those connected with bookkeeping. I suppose this is why some authorities say the application should be handwritten. I am willing to concede that a person applying for an accounting or a bookkeeping position should use pen and ink for the letter itself, but I suggest that the accompanying personal data sheet be typed. In my opinion, applicants who wish to be employed as typists, stenographers, or dictating-machine operators should by all means use a typewriter whenever possible.

After all, in what other line of work does a job seeker have such an opportunity to present a sample of his work? For a letter of application tells a great deal more about your ability as a typist than any mere statement of your qualifications and experience. It shows your knowledge of letter forms and your ability to compose, and gives a demonstration of your typing. And none of this is lost on the person who reads your letter. Of course, if you have not access to a machine that does good work, all you can do is to write neatly and legibly with pen and ink.

### **FOLLOW THE RULES IN SETTING UP YOUR LETTER**

It is to be supposed that senior commercial students know how to set up a business letter. But since so many of these communications on my desk show either carelessness or ignorance of the fundamental rules, I shall risk restating the basic principles of a business letter.

Consider the margins a white frame for your letter. Top and bottom margins should be fairly equal; the two side margins

should be about the same width. Your address should appear at the upper right as follows:

42 Melvin Road  
Boston, Massachusetts  
January 12, 19\_\_

Note that the date follows immediately below. Putting your address and the date together is more businesslike than to have your address follow your name at the bottom. An address at the top takes the place of a letterhead, such as is used by all business firms, giving the firm name and address.

**Inside Address.** At the left margin you should write the *exact* name of the person or firm you are addressing. I mention this because so many typists are careless about the spelling of names and about using correct initials.

If you are writing to an individual who knows you, as in classification five, you may address the letter to him and follow his name with his title, thus:

Mr. George Glastonbury, Vice-President  
Haydn & Brown Company  
1221 Broadway  
Louisville, Kentucky

But unless there is a personal reason why you should write to an individual member of a business firm, it is better form to address your letter to the company itself, marking it for the attention of the person you wish to reach. This is true of all types of business letters, because you have no way of knowing whether the person to whom you write may be out of the city or may even have left the organization. To illustrate, if your letter is addressed as follows, it will go to Mr. Hilton, if he is in town and is still personnel director. Otherwise, it will be opened and routed to the person acting for him or to his successor.

Haydn & Brown Company  
1221 Broadway  
Louisville, Kentucky  
Attention Mr. Fred Hilton, Personnel Director

This letter would carry the salutation, "Gentlemen," whereas if you wrote direct to the officer of the company, as previously indicated, the salutation should be either "Dear Mr. Glastonbury" or "Dear Sir."

**The Closing.** Authorities differ as to the correct closing for letters of application. Some feel that only "Yours truly," "Very truly yours," or "Yours very truly," are permissible. Other very good schools teach their students that "Sincerely yours," and even "Very sincerely yours," are not only allowable but the best form. I suggest that you follow the advice of your own school in this matter. However, "Cordially yours," is definitely too intimate, and "Respectfully yours," too servile to be used. Whatever closing you use, only the first word should begin with a capital and the phrase should end with a comma, thus:

Yours truly,

In all correspondence it is important that the closing be in conformity with the spirit of the letter. An application letter sent to someone you know would end more cordially than one addressed to a stranger.

#### TYPED NAME NOT A SIGNATURE

There seems to be a misapprehension among some business students as to the correct use of a typed name at the close of a letter. The custom of typing the correspondent's name below his actual signature has become general because so many executives sign their letters so illegibly. The typed name, however, is not a signature; it only serves to clarify the handwritten name. Yet, because they have seen printed signatures in books and have been told to type the dictator's name at the end of the letter, many young business graduates send out their own business letters with only their typewritten names at the end. This practice makes a very poor impression on businessmen who would not care to trust their correspondence to employees who are so little aware of the correct procedure in letter writing. Do

not type your name *at all* at the end of your letter. This is an executive privilege.

Another error often made by young women is to sign their name with "Miss" or "Mrs." as a prefix, without placing parentheses around it. The only reason for placing such a prefix before your name is to make known your state of life, and this is not important in a letter of application. When you do use the title in other correspondence, you should always place it in parentheses, as (Miss) Mary Brown. When writing their names, both young men and women should write out the first name in full; initials are not sufficient.

### THAT OVERWORKED PRONOUN, "I"

Before giving you the most approved three forms of application, let us analyze some of the errors in the actual letters of which I spoke earlier. Many of the writers have had difficulty in outlining their personal histories without overworking the personal pronoun "I." The writers may not be unduly conceited or self-centered, but that is the effect their letters create. A skeletonized version of one of them runs like this:

I saw your ad in the *Post* today. Please consider . . .  
 I graduated from Warren Harding High School—business course. While in school . . .  
 I have worked for the General Electric Company for approximately two . . .  
 I am 20 years old, weigh 150 pounds . . .  
 I can be ready to come down to your office . . .

### LOST: THE SUBJECT

In endeavoring to side-step the ubiquitous "I," some applicants fall into the equally bad error of dispensing with pronouns entirely. This, of course, produces a sentence without a subject. Consider the following:

Am happy to have seen your advertisement.  
 Was educated in the Walton High School and Case Business School.  
 Employed for six months as stenographer.

Graduate of Hope Secretarial School and have had experience in various kinds of office work.

Am 20 years old, unmarried, Protestant, and can give the best of references.

Can offer excellent references.

Trust an interview can be arranged.

Other applicants go to considerable inconvenience to refer to themselves as "the writer" or "the applicant," where a judicious use of the first person singular would be less stilted.

### THEY TOOT THEIR OWN HORNS

A common practice among writers of application letters is to comment on their own qualifications in an apparent effort to sell themselves to the reader. Here are a few examples from actual letters:

My education, qualifications and references should satisfy the requirements.

I am 21 years old, an honor graduate of the secretarial course of the Blank High School; am attractive and have an even disposition.

I have been doing secretarial work for the past six years and am considered quite a conscientious worker.

I am considered a neat and not bad looking person.

Kindly give consideration to this application of a sincere, mathematically minded American fellow, aged 24, possessing both business experience and a college education.

With modesty I would say I am a personable young woman, have initiative, expert stenographer, typist, bookkeeper, capable of taking charge of an office. . . .

Faithful, conscientious—just the man for you, I'm sure.

### WATCH YOUR GRAMMAR

As you undoubtedly notice, the self-praise is not the only thing wrong with some of these statements. Inept phraseology and

incorrect sentence structure characterize some of these and all too many other letters of application. Here are a few horrible examples on that score:

My education consists of high school and a business college of which I am a graduate.

Due to the present economical conditions, I am one of those who must seek new connections.

Am now employed, and although I am thankful for same, would like to do better.

### POOR SPELLING LANDS NO JOBS

Errors in spelling in letters of application certainly do nothing to smooth the path toward employment. Here are a few examples taken at random from my collection:

Yours truely,

Let me know if you are interested.

You know doubt come in contact with a great many applicants. . . .

I adapt myself to my job and am also cortious.

No doubt your just swamped with applications. . . .

I should be greatful if you. . . .

Neither they nor I faired any the worst for the contact.

The renumeration I receive means something to me.

### IT'S NOT FOR YOU TO SAY WHEN

Although it is important not to lose sight of the fact that you are primarily seeking an interview, you should not dictate how, where, or when the interview might take place or attempt to force one. The following quotations show how applicants can do themselves more harm than good by such urgency:

I would be grateful if an interview could be granted me within the next few days as I have to go out of town on Friday.

Hoping to have the pleasure of hearing from you Saturday, as I shall be at home all day.



Please let me hear from you right away, as I have other prospects.

### TAKE NO LIBERTIES WITH PROPER NAMES

Although I am certain that no business school teaches students to abbreviate in correspondence the names of cities, colleges, or schools, apparently many graduates take such short cuts. Letters on my desk refer to "Mnpls."—"Brdgpt."—"L.A."—and "Frisco." One is from "J.C.N.J.," which I finally deciphered as Jersey City, New Jersey. A businessman is not likely to be impressed with a letter containing such abuse of proper names, nor will it mean anything to him that an applicant spent two years at "U. of P." or is a graduate of "Tech." These are marks of provincialism and should be carefully guarded against in all correspondence. And, believe it or not, such errors occur even in well-staffed offices. I once borrowed for dictation the private secretary to the president of a department store at which I was a guest speaker. I was aghast to find "N.Y." used in the body of my transcribed letters, not to mention "L.A." and "S.F." When I remonstrated, the young secretary assured me that her chief made no objection to these abbreviations. Sometimes a busy man grows lax about such small details, but let it never be forgotten that one reason he hires a secretary rather than a stenographer is to relieve him of the burden of watching the details of correct correspondence and other office procedure.

### ALIBIS ARE WORSE THAN STUPID

In a later chapter you will be told that employers take strict account of attitude. This is equally true in dealing with potential employees by correspondence. When an applicant apologizes in his letter the employer is suspicious of an alibi. Here are some typical excuses:

Please do not judge my typing ability by this letter, as the machine is an old one. I assure you a modern machine would produce good work.

Excuse the pencil, please. My pen has gone dry.

### KEEP SELF-INTEREST IN BACKGROUND

Then there are those who consider first what they will get out of the association, rather than what they can do for the employer.

I am visiting in New York and most eager to locate here for personal reasons.

I find school teaching very nerve-racking and it would be so lovely to work surrounded by your beautiful merchandise.

### NO WHINERS NEED APPLY

Another group of applicants approach jobs by attempting to be ingratiating. From my files I quote:

Your ad reads as though it were written just for me.

Your advertisement in this morning's *Times* seems a finger of Fate.

But the worst "boner" of all—the one any employer would snort at—is the complaint about the conditions the applicant faces. Here is a sample of what I mean:

Of course I realize my speed is not what it should be, but how can I gain speed when the call is for girls who have already had experience and are fast?

And this is surely "one for the book"!

How can a girl have experience if business men don't want to give a girl a chance?

Can't you hear employers and personnel directors say, "So what?" to these selfish, fawning, and disgruntled whiners? Can you imagine any of them ever landing an interview, much less a job?

### LETTERS THAT WIN INTERVIEWS

Now let's see what sort of letter does win interviews and influence employers favorably. To write a forceful letter, you need to avoid wordiness as well as cut-and-dried expressions. Your opening paragraph should apply formally for the position

in some such way as was indicated under the five suggestions previously covered. Then you come to the forking of the road. You must choose whether

1. To put the required personal data in the body of your letter
2. To list the personal data on a separate sheet and merely call attention to this in your letter
3. To combine 1 and 2 by tabulating the data in your letter

Any of these methods of presenting your qualifications is correct. However, there is a growing preference among business firms for the separate data sheet, because it enables an interviewer to get the important data at a glance. Also, it is convenient for filing. From your point of view its advantage is that it enables you to write a very short letter of application. Once you have assembled your data concretely, your letter writing will be very easy.

#### WHEN THE PERSONAL DATA ARE IN THE LETTER

The letters reproduced here will show you the difference in construction of these three forms of application. In the first letter, you will observe that the necessary information about the applicant is embodied in the letter.

1541 Derby Street  
Berkeley, California  
January 14, 19\_\_

Box 75321  
Berkeley Gazette  
Berkeley, California

Gentlemen:

In answer to your advertisement in the *Berkeley Gazette*, I am submitting my application for the position of bookkeeper-stenographer which you have open.

I am twenty-four years old; an American, born in Illinois; Protestant; single; height, six feet; weight, 165 pounds; health, good.

I was graduated from Lincoln High School, Chicago, in June 19\_\_. After two years at the University of California, I spent

a year preparing for business at the Calaveras Secretarial School, San Francisco.

As to experience—my first position was as a typist-clerk with the Traymore Oil Company, of California. After six months I was promoted to a stenographic position, while retaining a few clerical duties. I left this company after a year to take a better paying position as stenographer-clerk with the Morgan Securities Company in their Oakland office.

For the past two years I have been in the army, where my work was clerical in the Quartermaster Corps. I have kept up my shorthand, so that I feel I could step at once into the position you advertise.

Permission has been given me to refer you to Mr. Henry Parker, Office Manager of the Traymore Company, and to Mr. Frederick H. Belknap, Secretary and Treasurer, of the Morgan Securities Company. Both can tell you about the quality of my work and about me, personally.

If my application interests you, I shall be available for an interview at your convenience. My residence telephone number is BErkley 4592, where a message may be left, setting a time for me to call upon you.

Very truly yours,  
(Signature) George Hanson

#### **A LETTER PLUS A PERSONAL DATA SHEET**

The next letter illustrates the method of confining to a separate sheet all data such as educational, personal, and other qualifications as well as references.

79 Moss Road  
St. Louis, Missouri  
January 23, 19\_\_

Mr. James Sullivan, General Merchandise Manager  
Carryall Products Company  
St. Louis, Missouri

Dear Sir:

Are you interested in securing an energetic young woman who can do secretarial and stenographic work and who has also had selling experience in a large department store? A genuine liking for merchandising and a strong educational background

qualify me to be of valuable assistance to one of your busy executives.

I am a capable stenographer, able to take rapid dictation and to transcribe my notes neatly and accurately. I have also had thorough courses in accounting, bookkeeping, and filing, and I am a qualified dictaphone operator.

On the separate sheet which you will find enclosed, I have outlined my education and specialized training, and I have listed the names of three business and professional men who have expressed their willingness to answer your questions concerning me.

I should like to talk with you further about my qualifications for a stenographic position in your department. Would you like me to come and take dictation from you so that you may know the character of my work?

I am available at once and can be reached by telephone at ALbany 6878. May I have an interview?

Very truly yours,  
(Signature) Marian Morris

Enc.

I have not Marian Morris's personal data sheet to give you, but here is another which you can study. You will see that, although Helen Major is a beginner in business, she is not without experience. All during her student days she did some form of work which now can be listed as experience. All beginners should take full advantage of these undergraduate experiences in compiling an application.

#### PERSONAL DATA

Helen Major  
8341 Oakland Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri  
WOodstock 5-2210

#### EXPERIENCE—

Three years with Yorkshire Exchange as Cashier, Cashier-Clerk, and Demonstrator, part-time while in school  
Two years of typing for University students, theses, reports, term papers, news copy, and plays, while in college

One year of proofreading and copy writing for a student publication, while in college

One year of tutoring University students in Mathematics and English, while in college

### QUALIFICATIONS—

Fast and accurate stenographer

Experienced in stencil cutting, typing manuscripts and legal documents, billing and invoicing

Sound mathematical background and a natural aptitude for handling figures

Good foundation in financial work, accurate at computation, bookkeeping, and compilation of statistical records.

Filing, both theoretical training and actual practice

Extensive training and experience at original composition and individual letter writing

### PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS—

Sound health

Age—20 years

Alertness

Religion—Protestant

Ambition

Height—5'6"

Sense of Responsibility

Weight—135 lbs.

### EDUCATION—

Maplewood High School, graduate, upper one-tenth of class

Washington University, two years, scholarship student

Blank Business School, nine months

### UNIVERSITY COURSES—

Political Science

Spanish (good reading, fair speaking knowledge)

Economics

Plane and Solid Geometry

Latin

Trigonometry

English Composition

Accounting and Bookkeeping

Speech

Journalism

Dramatics

## MACHINES USED—

Comptometer  
 Typewriter (touch system)  
 Dictaphone  
 Adding machine  
 Ditto and Mimeograph  
 machines

## ABILITY TO USE—

Good  
 Excellent  
 Good  
 Fair  
 Fair

## REFERENCES (by permission)—

Mr. Kenneth Brown, Credit Manager  
 H. W. French & Company  
 233 North Scott Street, St. Louis, Missouri  
 FRanklin 6679

Mr. Charles H. Harwell  
 836 Adams Ave., St. Louis, Missouri  
 GLen 0593

References to former school principals or teachers may be added.

## A COMBINED LETTER AND DATA SHEET

Here is a method of combining the letter and the personal data sheet:

752 Bond Street  
 Bridgeport, Connecticut  
 February 1, 19\_\_

John B. Mackintosh, Inc.  
 700 Bell Road  
 Hartford, Connecticut

Attention Mr. R. B. Bell, Office Manager

Gentlemen:

Through my present employer, Mr. David Hughes of the Bridgeport Metal Company, I have learned that you are looking for an experienced stenographer who can assume responsibility. Mr. Hughes knows that I wish to move to Hartford because my family now resides there.

Briefly, here is my history:

**EDUCATION**

Graduate Polytechnic High School, New York, June,  
1941

One year Hunter College, New York

Nine months secretarial course, the Blank Business  
School, New York

**EXPERIENCE**

Typist, Hope Insurance Company, New York—one  
year (1943–1944)

Stenographer—Bailey & Hatch Company, Bridgeport,  
Connecticut—nine months, (1944–1945)

Secretary-Stenographer—Bridgeport Metal Company,  
(1945— )

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Age—23

Nationality—American born

Religion—Presbyterian

Height—5'3"

Weight—115 pounds

Health—excellent

**RECOMMENDATIONS (by permission)**

Miss Mary Dale, Office Manager  
Hope Insurance Company, New York

Mr. Paul Murphy, Personnel Director  
Bailey & Hatch Company  
Bridgeport, Connecticut

Mr. David Hughes, Vice-President  
Bridgeport Metal Company  
Bridgeport, Connecticut

May I have an opportunity to talk with you at your convenience? Mr. Hughes has said I may go to Hartford to see you, if you will set a time.

Yours truly,  
(Signature) Jane Small



In all three of these types of letters of application, your aim should be to make the employer feel that you are well qualified for the position and that he would profit by the use of your services. Under no circumstances should you plead need or explain that you would like the position for personal reasons.

### CHARACTER REFERENCES IMPORTANT

Either in your letter, or on your personal data sheet, you should give both business and character references. If you are applying for your first position and have had no experience, your references, of necessity, will be character references only. Do not neglect including them. Before writing letters of application, you should ask permission to use as references the names of friends of established position in your community, school officials or businessmen who know you, giving their full names, addresses, and titles. Whenever possible list their business telephones. Do not include names of relatives.

Here are some suggestions for sentences introducing references, when these are given in the letter itself:

I refer you by permission to . . .

I have permission to refer you to . . .

Mr. G. E. Williams, Principal of Union High School, has given me permission to refer you to him for information regarding my personal skills.

Mr. Albert Haynes, manager of the book department of Blank Department Store, has known me for ten years. He will be willing to give you any personal information concerning me you may wish to have.

### THE CORRECT CLOSING

Your letter should close with a definite request for an interview and give the telephone where you may be reached. Such a request could be phrased like this:

May I have a personal interview at your convenience? My telephone number is . . .

**I can be reached by telephone at MARKET 4427. I shall appreciate an opportunity for a personal interview.**

**May I call at your office for an interview? If you wish to telephone me, I can be reached at . . .**

Each letter should end with a positive sentence, as in the above illustrations. Always avoid such obsolete expressions as "Looking forward to an early reply"—"Hoping I may hear from you, I am"—"Thanking you in anticipation of a reply."

#### **WHEN TO ENCLOSE A PHOTOGRAPH—AND WHAT KIND**

When an advertisement requests a photograph, you should always enclose one, of course. Otherwise, I should say it is better not to peddle your likeness around. However, be sure that any photograph you use in such a way is small and looks businesslike, which means that broad grins and evening clothes are out. Also, be sure that it does you justice. You might get some photographs as, for instance, prints of those taken for your school paper, if you are only a year or so beyond graduation. Enclose them with your personal data sheets to your very best prospects.

#### **FOLLOW-UP LETTERS**

In the preceding chapter, letters were mentioned along with calls in person and by telephone as a means of following up your leads. I cannot think of any circumstances where your letter of application would be followed immediately by a second letter. You cannot expect a businessman to enter into correspondence with you. If he is willing to grant you an interview, fine. If he is not, you cannot secure an interview by bombarding him with letters. You will only make a pest of yourself.

After you have been interviewed by an employer or his representative, you may occasionally have a good excuse to write and remind the interviewer of your existence. But the excuse must not be too apparent. Perhaps the interviewer asked for some information you did not have with you, such as would be con-

tained in your personal data sheet. Under such circumstances a brief follow-up letter would be in order. To thank the interviewer for his courtesy would be a graceful way to begin such a letter. Here is a good example of a follow-up letter that fits such a situation:

560 North Williams  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
January 14, 19\_\_

Mr. Paul Brown  
Humboldt Building  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Brown:

Thank you so much for the courteous interview you gave me this afternoon.

I am confident that I can do competent, accurate stenographic work and meet the high standard that your work requires.

A data sheet is enclosed. It will set before you in compact form my qualifications and experience, and also give you an opportunity to judge my work.

May I look forward to your favorable decision?

Sincerely yours,  
(Signature) Margaret A. Jones

Enc.

I do not suggest following every interview with a "thank you" note. When you have been so fortunate as to be interviewed by someone who apparently has jobs to dispense and who seems really interested in you, by all means follow this up with a brief and courteous letter of thanks. Such a gesture will show your appreciation of the time the interviewer spent with you and will serve also to recall you to his attention. If the interviewer already has a copy of your personal data sheet you could use the letter given above and omit the paragraph that refers to the enclosure.

Having sent your "thank you" note, consider the correspondence closed, as far as you are concerned. If your prospect wishes

to hear further from you, he will let you know. The only possible thing you can do now, except perhaps for one telephone call to show your interest, is to wait.

### WORK AND REWORK YOUR BASIC LETTER

Mastering the art of writing good letters of application is something you can and should do now before you leave business school. Either then, or during your early job-seeking days, spend all the time it takes—several days if necessary—formulating an excellent letter. Assemble a data sheet or a letter containing the information that should go in such a personal record. Have such material ready, neatly typed. Keep it on tap in your mind, too. In some interviews you may be asked to sit down right then and write a letter of application, stating why you think the firm should employ you. If you take this chapter to heart, such a request need not put you in a panic.

This letter should, of course, be reworked and polished until you feel sure it is the best you can produce. When you are satisfied with it, take the letter to someone in business, preferably to someone who has to do with employment, and ask for criticism. If your critic suggests changes, rework your letter until he, or someone else equally informed, tells you it is a good key to unlock interviewing doors.

When you have a good letter, make it the basis of all your written applications. You will need only to vary the opening sentence to fit the situation. Getting yourself organized on paper will do wonders for your self-confidence and will help immeasurably on those occasions when you need to use a letter to pave the way.

### QUESTIONS

1. Should a letter of application attempt to get a job or an interview?
2. If you apply to a great many firms by letter and get no answers, should you conclude that job seeking is useless?
3. What is the difference between aimless canvassing by mail and writing to a carefully selected list of business firms?

4. What kind of Help Wanted advertisements can only be answered by letter?

5. When you write in reply to a want ad your letter will be one of many. How can you make it stand out?

6. Why do you need to study an advertisement very carefully before composing your letter of application?

7. If you wrote to an executive who knew you or your family, he would probably grant you an interview. Would this interview necessarily lead to a job?

8. Does the form in which a letter of application is set up have anything to do with the attention it receives?

9. When should a letter of application be written by hand? When on the typewriter?

10. Can an applicant depend upon high-pressure selling in his letters to get interviews when *he* wants them?

11. Are employers unreasonable when they object to the abbreviating of proper names in letters?

12. Why do you think all three approved letter forms given in this chapter recommend that applicants state their age, height, weight, and nationality?

13. Why are interviewers skeptical of the applicant whose letter indicates only self-interest? Of the applicant whose letter whines?

14. Does a name typed at the end of a letter constitute a signature?

15. Do you feel that giving references in your letter of application will help you to get an interview?

16. Should you write a "thank you" letter to an interviewer who did not offer you any encouragement or suggest your calling again?

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the place letters of application occupy in the procedure of job hunting. Can letters be counted on actually to get jobs?

2. When is it desirable to use a letter? Discuss the five situations in which your text recommends writing letters of application.

3. Many letters of application are written because of

- a. Dread of personal interviews
- b. The belief that letters produce jobs
- c. A desire to please parents

Explain why none of these is a legitimate reason for applying by letter.

4. Name four things you should bear in mind when writing a letter in reply to a Help Wanted advertisement.

5. Since so many applicants give little heed to the form and content of their letters, why should you bother to prepare yours carefully?

6. In writing a letter to a firm which you hear has a vacancy you could fill, should you state the source of your information? What if you were given this tip confidentially?

7. A well-trained beginner is applying for a stenographic position. She wishes to use her letter as a sample of her work. What skills and abilities can her letter be made to demonstrate?

8. Should you praise yourself in your application letters, on the assumption that unless you tell how good you are no one will know it? Or can you depend upon your letter's speaking for you through its appearance and content?

9. Suppose you are answering a letter that requests a photograph. You have nothing that is businesslike. Shall you send a smiling photograph on the chance that it will help? Or will you disregard the instructions and omit the photograph? What will you do?

10. Why is it advisable to include character references in your application letters? Is it sufficient to give only the names of your references, or should you add their firm names, the positions held, the addresses, and telephone numbers?

11. Discuss the distinguishing features of the three approved types of letters recommended by your text. Which form do you like best? Why would you adopt it for your applications?

### PROJECTS

1. *a.* Assemble a personal data sheet. Give accurate information and details about your education, personal qualifications, experience, etc. Use the Personal Data Sheet, reproduced in Chapter IX, as a guide.

*b.* Write a letter to accompany this information. Address your letter as though it were to be sent to someone who knows you or knows who you are.

2. Select an advertisement from among those reproduced below and make an application for the position described. Use any of the three types of letters described in this chapter. In writing your letter confine

yourself to your actual experience, or assume that you have the experience requested.

### Help Wanted—Women

**STENOGRAPHER**, legal experience, commercial bookkeeping, \$40. Y 240 Gazette.

**STENOGRAPHER**, rapid, monitor board, attractive \$37 50. T 51 Journal

**SECRETARY**—Executive of large drug firm requires young lady with executive secretarial background. Imperative that she have following qualifications. Ability to handle details and assume responsibility, above average intelligence, initiative, sound judgment good educational background, poised graciousness and dignity State fully experience, references, salaries in previous positions, education, age and religion. TR 184 Herald

**SECRETARY**—Receptionist, good appearance, no experience necessary. MN 45 Tribune

**EXPORT** executive requires thoroughly experienced operator, dictaphone or ediphone, fluent both English, Spanish State experience, education, salary R 45 Herald.

**TYPIST**—file clerks (5), large midtown firm, several openings neat, willing workers (17-21), briefly state age, education, experience if any, salary expected, own handwriting Box 171, Times

**TYPIST**—Clerk having casualty claim experience Give full details in reply and state salary Y 131 Star

**BOOKKEEPER-STENOGRAPHER**, resort hotel, summer, Long Island, winter, North Carolina Hotel experience necessary State age, religion, salary expected. Y 59 Examiner

**COMPTOMETER** operator, experienced all operations, \$30 to start. State age, experience. Y 74 Tribune

**SECRETARY**, under 25, attractive, must be rapid, accurate in stenographic work and general office routine, advertising experience preferable, salary open T 50 News.

**BOOKKEEPER**, experienced, competent, cultured, neat appearance, possessing executive ability, act as model when occasion requires, salary \$40 week to start. B 20 Gazette

**RECEPTIONIST**, Require young woman with training and experience, state qualifications experience and wages expected. T 81 Times

**RECEPTIONIST**, attractive, fashion modeling, lessons and small salary in return for services W 143 Post

**STENOGRAPHER** file clerk, monitor board, \$35. Rapid advancement. Y 31 News

**SECRETARY**, intelligent, cheerful disposition, good correspondent, orderly, able take complete charge, small importing office, pleasant atmosphere, no other employes, nominal salary to start, state ambitions, education, background. W 124 Times.

**CLERKS, \$25 start; knowledge typing, like figures. 5 days. Permanent. Professional. L 21, this newspaper.**  
**CLERKS, beginners. H.S. grads. \$80 mo. Fitch & McCoy, 350 1st Nat. Bk. Bldg.**  
**CLERK, good at figures; know. switchboard. \$25 week. Wabash 3256.**  
**CLERK, filing. Some typing. Bright beginner considered. 5 days. Good opportunity. 75 Front Street.**  
**CLERK, knowledge bookkeeping essential. \$35. Reply in own handwriting. 166 Broadway.**

### Help Wanted—Men

**ACCOUNTANTS, experienced. Well-established company. Z 20 Herald.**  
**CLERKS. Statistical Clerks and Mail Clerks. Forty-two hours per week. Write, enclosing references. T 391 Gazette.**  
**STENOGRAPHER and office assistant, experienced; also a beginner. Brooklyn office. Give age, detailed experience, education, references, religion, salary. Z 59 Herald.**  
**TYPIST or stenographer with thorough knowledge of details associated with export shipments, including preparation of export declarations, bills of lading, consular invoices, and calculation of freight charges. Working knowledge of Spanish helpful, but not essential. Good opportunity for competent, dependable, hard working person. No others need apply. State age, nationality, religion, education, experience and salary. Y 135 Enquirer.**  
**YOUNG Man, 25 to 30, to train as casualty claim investigator. Opportunity for advancement. Sales experience preferred. Answer fully. Y 130 Tribune.**  
**YOUNG MAN, high school graduate, good typist, large manufacturing concern; give full particulars age, education, religion, etc. D 4 Herald.**  
**YOUNG man; stenographer; general office work. Advancement. State salary. Z 38 Post Gazette.**  
**STENOGRAPHER—Male, familiar with engineering and metal working terminology. Location downtown New York. Z 75 Herald.**  
**BOOKKEEPER—Stenographer, take charge small office; moderate salary start; state full particulars. Y 9 Tribune.**  
**STENOGRAPHER—Office, trade journal; capable taking technical dictation; knowledge of statistical set-up; closed Saturdays. State age, education, experience, religion and salary expected. D 482 Telegram.**

3. There are mistakes in all the following quotations from letters of application. Rewrite them correctly and be prepared to give orally your reasons for the changes.

I would very much like to apply for the position in the lawyer's office of which you mentioned in your add in this morning's *News*.



I read your adv. in the evening *Examiner* of May 26, and I am writing to you for more details about the position you have to offer.

In reference to your ad, the writer has a High-Prep and Business School experience.

Was employed for three years in the Merchandising Dept. of the AT&T in NJ and NY.

Can offer excellent references and ask for a personal interview.

While I have not had the two years legal experience your ad requires, it occurred to me you might have some other jobs which I could be fitted for, so I am answering anyway.

I am a twenty-one years old, personable, well-groomed and a high-school graduate.

This is the work I can do: file clerk and a little typing.

Am a young lady twenty-three yrs. of age. American and refined. Have had sevrl yrs. experience & am a good worker. Have good references. Will close in hopes of some good news from you.

Thank you for giving my application your special attention.

Yours respectfully

Mrs Ann Martin (typed)

Thanking you for your attention, I am

Yours truly

Please let me know by return mail if this application is excepted.

If you care for references I will be glad to furnish you with names and addresses of people who will tell you I'm O.K.

4. a. If you are well read and informed on any one subject and have spent a summer working in that field, would you consider that this knowledge especially qualified you for office work in a related line of business? Figure out the kinds of business in which your knowledge might prove valuable. Make a list of firms in your community to whom you would offer your services. How would you begin your letter in order to catch their interest at once?

b. If you have no specialized knowledge, select a field in which you are interested and assume that you have special ability and experience in it. Then proceed with the above exercise.

5. This chapter contains many erroneous excerpts from actual letters of application. Examine these and be prepared to state wherein the errors lie. Rewrite correctly.

## CHAPTER X

### MAKING GOOD ON THE JOB

And now you have a job. Fine. I congratulate you! The next thing is, what are you going to do with it? Probably you feel that, with your job of getting a job over, you are well on your way. Of course you are, provided that now your goal is to make good on the job.

A friend of mine who is personnel director of a large organization tells me her greatest problem with beginners is to get them to realize they must do something about that job after they get it. Perhaps because it is such an achievement to get one's first job, some of these young people think, once they have succeeded in that, the race is run and won. Actually, job getting is merely a sort of warming-up exercise, and now the race is really on. Rightly or wrongly, a great deal of service is expected in a business office, even from the greenest recruit. Remember that right behind you is the next graduating class of young business aspirants. They are treading hard on your heels. Girls, especially, have to look out for those coming up just behind them. So look to your laurels and see to it you are well worth your salary from the very beginning.

The competition is not so keen among young men who are trained in business, because there are fewer of them. But don't let that make you cocky! Watch your step and work to make good or you, too, will be replaced. I heard recently of a young man who somewhat nonchalantly held a stenographic job but who was already slated to go as soon as someone better could be found to fill his place. He had no idea that his employer considered him lazy. But there it was. He had a habit of cutting out promptly at five o'clock with a gay, "So long," completely

oblivious to how busy the department was. Those who remained had to finish up the day's work, theirs and his, too. Apparently, no one intended to tell him to "get a move on." He was being permitted to go his own way, but everyone else knew he would soon have to hustle for another job.

In this chapter I want to give you a few pointers about making good. You'll also find Chapters XI and XVI helpful in this respect. Of course you have the needed skills; otherwise you would not have been employed. Presumably you have the good judgment also to dress appropriately or, once again, you would not have secured the job. In an earlier chapter we talked about correct business clothes, and doubtless you have since inspected your wardrobe from that point of view. So far, so good. But let us look at some of the other factors that will now enter the picture.

### **THE "BREAKS" ARE WITH YOU**

Let's suppose it is your first day at the office. No matter how well you are prepared for what will happen, this is likely to be a trying day. So many adjustments to make, so much information to absorb, so much to observe, and so much to remember! But cheer up! On almost any new job you will be given every possible "break." Those above you are just as desirous that you should prove a successful employee as you are to be one, and allowance will be made for everything's being strange to you.

### **LEARN AS YOU GO**

You will have been told, at the time you were engaged, to report to a certain person at a certain hour for assignment to your duties. If you will look before you leap during these first instructions, you will start out much more securely. Do not be afraid to ask questions. It is so much better to be sure you understand your work thoroughly at this stage that you can well afford to be a human question mark. Many beginners fear they will appear ignorant, and so they nod and say, "Yes," when actually they don't know what it is all about. Don't make that mistake.

Don't trust to luck and hope you can glean enough information as the day goes on to get the "hang" of things.

Listen very carefully. It is a good idea to make notes, not only of just what you are to do but of the names of the persons from whom you are to take work or further instructions. At the end of the day, go back to the person who first instructed you and ask further necessary questions. No one will object to your doing this. In fact, they will admire you for your persistence in trying to clear up anything you fail to understand.

When you are introduced to the men and women in your department, make it a point to get their names correctly. To be able to say from the start, "Yes, Mr. Dinkelspeil," or "Thank you, Mr. Deute," is a simple courtesy that makes quite a hit. One way of getting these names right is to repeat them immediately after you have heard them for the first time. In your case this probably would be when you acknowledge the introduction. At your first opportunity, write each name down with the title of the person after it. Then memorize your list so you can use the names correctly when occasion permits.

The office manager or someone else will assign you your lunch hour, and, although they may not say so, unless you have to punch a clock you will be expected to observe it exactly. Apart from being an important office rule, returning promptly from lunch is the courteous thing to do so as not to delay someone else who is waiting to go when you return. You'll be mighty unpopular if you infringe on the next person's precious hour! If you have not been told what the office hours are, this is the time to ask. Don't just watch other employees to see when they wind up their work and get ready to leave. For one thing, they may not be working on the same schedule as you are, or they may be slacking.

#### BE PUNCTUAL AND COURTEOUS

Regardless of how early the opening hour is, you must time your leaving home so that you will arrive at the office on the dot. Nothing puts an employee so much in the wrong as perpetually

making excuses for tardiness. Office managers were not born yesterday, and they have heard that one about the bus or the streetcar breaking down. You are expected to put in seven and a half or eight hours a day, depending upon the office regulations. And you must begin work at the time everyone else does.

If ever good business manners help, it is on this first bewildering day on the new job. You know only too well everyone is sizing you up, and you would like to appear to good advantage. Now is the time to watch your p's and q's. Naturally you will be very courteous to the person who outlines your duties, and when you meet executives for whom you are to work you will be respectful but not servile. If you are introduced to any of the employees on your own level, your cue is to be polite and pleasant but not too friendly. At the start it is important not to get chummy before you have had time to size up the situation and to decide with whom you wish to make friends. It is very easy to get in with the wrong crowd, so it is a good policy to be equally pleasant and impersonal with everyone. But more about that in our next chapter. Right now you have enough to do to learn the job without taking on problems of human relationships. Just bear in mind that it is possible you may have been brought in to pave the way for someone to be let out. Keep aloof and give no one a chance to pour complaints or office politics into your ears. For the moment see nothing and know nothing but your own job.

Your first day of work behind you, things will begin to shape up and presently you will be thoroughly at home. If you are quiet and collected and sure that you are equal to whatever the situation demands, the period of adjustment may be very short indeed. So organize your forces, go to it, and make good.

#### NOW CHARACTER BEGINS TO COUNT

If you fail on your first job after good school training, the chances are the difficulty lies in some character trait rather than in a lack of skills. Reproduced here is a study made some years ago to ascertain the most prevalent causes for dismissal or failure

to win promotion. Seventy-six large organizations cooperated in this survey, among them Cluett, Peabody and Company, Commonwealth Edison Company, the Equitable Life Assurance Society, and the General Electric Company. You will see, by a study of this report, that only 10 per cent of the employees of these firms were let out because of lack of skill. Character traits accounted for practically 90 per cent of the dismissals and for over 75 per cent of the failures to win promotion.

Of course we must admit that sometimes work faults set the stage for emotional flare-ups. For example, a misplaced paper or a misspelled word can cause an executive to lose his temper. In turn, the employee becomes discourteous or even uncooperative. The end result may appear to be a character fault, but the original cause was a deficiency in a skill, such as filing or spelling.

#### ARE YOUR FAULTS LISTED HERE?

I cannot too strongly urge you to study very carefully the list of undesirable character traits shown on page 253, which caused the firing squad to get busy. Some of the reasons for failure look very innocent, yet they can sneak up on you like a thief in the night and snatch away your job.

Supervisors of young people in large offices all over the country tell me their experience bears out these findings. One friend in the correspondence department of a large insurance company told me not long ago that beginners seem to expect the work to be play. She feels that in school so many studies take the form of play projects that young people become conditioned to that point of view.

Also, boys and girls who have got through school or college on a C average imagine they can get along in business with the same low grade. This results in carelessness and laziness, which, you will have observed from the report given here, are among the top three causes for losing jobs. Actually, what business requires is an A or at least an A— average. And it ruthlessly weeds out those who do not keep up to this standard. But this is not so hard to attain as it may appear at first glance. You

should stay in school until your mastery of business skills is well up toward the A grade in the field in which you are seeking a job. Beyond that you will need to average high in character traits. These of course can be cultivated. So check yourself carefully

WHY THEY COULDN'T HOLD THEIR JOBS\*

	Most common causes for dismissal, per cent	Deficiencies preventing promotion, per cent
<i>Lack of specific skills:</i>		
In shorthand.....	2.2	3.2
In typewriting.....	1.6	2.4
In English.....	1.6	5.2
In dictaphone.....	1.3	1.6
In arithmetic.....	1.3	3.0
In office machines.....	0.9	2.2
In bookkeeping.....	0.6	1.4
In spelling.....	0.6	2.7
In penmanship.....	0.0	1.8
	10.1	23.5
<i>Character traits:</i>		
Carelessness.....	14.1	7.9
Noncooperation.....	10.7	6.7
Laziness.....	10.3	6.4
Absence for causes other than illness.....	8.5	3.7
Dishonesty.....	8.1	1.2
Attention to outside things.....	7.9	5.6
Lack of initiative.....	7.6	10.9
Lack of ambition.....	7.2	9.7
Tardiness.....	6.7	4.6
Lack of loyalty.....	3.5	4.6
Lack of courtesy.....	2.2	3.3
Insufficient care of and improper clothing.....	1.6	3.0
Self-satisfaction.....	0.9	4.4
Irresponsibility.....	0.3	0.8
Inadaptability.....	0.3	1.4
Absence due to illness.....	0.0	2.4
	89.9	76.5

\* *Personnel Journal*, December, 1935.



against the list given in the report and strive to maintain the very highest standard of which you are capable in these desirable characteristics.

### AND NOW THE DAILY GRIND

Sometimes beginners simply cannot stand the pressure of normal office work. Even if they have had reasonably long periods of dictation, at least as long as the school schedule permits, they will have to get used to still longer periods in the office when their entire time is devoted to taking dictation and transcribing it. Those who are so fortunate as to start as stenographers sometimes find the grind more than they can hold up under. So, having the skills, be sure you have or are acquiring the necessary stamina. Among those who are let out for lack of skills may be many who actually are skilled but who lack the ability to use these strenuously enough to satisfy their employers.

In my employment agency work I more than once put girls into jobs which I warned them would be very strenuous. Although without exception they laughed at this prospect, I learned later that several of them quit because they could not keep up with the terrific pace demanded of them. How well you adjust to the grind in some high-gearred offices depends very largely upon how badly you need the job. If you go to work merely because all your friends are doing so, it is not likely you will see it through when you find yourself in the confusion of rush work, endless detail, and frazzled nerves.

Some young people who have looked forward with high hopes to entering the business world are disappointed. Office routine, the monotony of repetitive tasks, deflates their enthusiasm. I know one boy who quit after being promoted from mail clerk to order clerk. He said he wasn't interested in taking orders over the phone all day long for "Two dozen No. 572." Alas, there is no substitute for experience and maturity. Contrast this lad's restlessness with the stick-to-itiveness of a young man, who, on graduating from college, went to work packing coffee for one of the big distributors. He struggled along in lowly and sometimes

menial jobs for three or four years. At times he was very discouraged. Had his father given him an expensive education that he might know how to sort can sizes? But he kept plugging, and after hours he studied coffee from A to Z, and Spanish, too. Finally, he got a promotion, and then one day, before he had been out of college five years, he found himself a full-fledged coffee buyer for an important broker in Central America. He had not despised the day of small things.

It is very easy to go slack on routine jobs. You must watch out that the monotony of endless detail does not dull your attention. Cultivate alertness all you can. This should include an eagerness to learn. If you evince a sincere desire to absorb thoroughly everything you should know about your job, it will make up in a measure for your inexperience. Never mind if your job is on the very lowest rung of the ladder. Without that rung the ladder would be weaker. Try to think of "No. 572" and the sorting of can sizes as so many future orders in the sales department. Each of them helps to pay your salary. The more of them you deal with the more prosperous the business. And the sooner you lick that job the sooner you will take the next step up.

### KEEP ALERT AND BE BUSINESSLIKE

Your first effort should be to achieve businesslike habits of carefulness, neatness, and accuracy in handling detail. Have a system in going about your work. Be sure your desk contains everything you need and everything in its place. If you have occasion to use names, dates, and figures in your work, be as concerned with accuracy as a newspaper reporter. You would do well to attack your duties as though you were in the employ of the irascible New York editor who fires without ado any reporter who misspells a name *once only*! If messages by telephone are part of your work, acquire the habit of noting in writing the precise time of the message, as well as the names of the persons involved. If none of the things I have mentioned concerns you

on your first job, figure out which things among your duties are the easiest to be careless about and watch those diligently.

### FORM PAINSTAKING HABITS EARLY

Be most painstaking and exact. So few people are either, as our table showed. Once, when I was writing a newspaper column, I checked to see how often correspondents spelled my name correctly. It may surprise you to know it was wrong more often than it was right. Yet my correspondents were persons who had the newspaper containing my printed name before them. Moreover, most of them were business girls asking for business information! One reason supervisors are necessary in large offices is that the great majority of workers are guilty of this sort of slipshod performance. Individual workers could be paid more if it were not necessary to pay a supervisor to "check and double check."

When anticipating your first day in the office, I told you to listen carefully and be sure that you understood your instructions. This warning by no means applies only to your first day. Every hour of every day you work you must give active attention to what you are told to do. Your immediate instructions as well as those general duties that constitute your job must be carried out carefully and conscientiously. Only in this way can you make good and be in line for more responsible work. The slipshod habits we have been talking about include, among other things, a shocking failure to grasp instructions. With their minds on other things—often their personal pleasures or problems—many employees lend only half an ear to the directions given them. Perhaps this explains a goodly percentage of those jobs lost through carelessness.

And, speaking of slipshod habits, be careful never to let yourself become casual about taking office supplies for personal use. I speak of this as a "slipshod habit" because those who do it are rarely dishonest. It is so easy to use office stamps, stationery, or other supplies now and then. But the practice is bad, and for

your own protection it is well to avoid even the appearance of dishonesty by practicing the strictest integrity.

As I have already suggested, stick-to-itiveness is another businesslike habit that must be acquired early. When you were little, Mother rewarded you for staying with a job until it was done. That was a period of training. Now you have to cash in on that training, with no other reward than the job itself. In business you are obligated to take the responsibility for seeing the work through to a successful conclusion. The sole purpose of employing office help is to get out a volume of work. Unless employees can do that, there would be no reason for keeping them on.

#### TRAITS THAT WIN CONFIDENCE

Another desirable trait is the ability to think for yourself. Some people have a way of knowing just what is wanted; they manifest a sort of native good judgment. Others, though faithful and conscientious, lack this almost intuitive sense and so do not get along so well. When I joined an advertising agency as an account executive several years ago, the president of the company said to me, "We like people who are self-operating." No matter how little initiative you actually are able to use on a beginning job, within the limits of the job itself you should carry on as independently as possible. An employer pays others to take care of detail. He wants to feel that when he turns over a job to someone, he can forget it and know it will be done and done right.

Such confidence is won through a series of trials by fire. Here is the way one employer tests his subordinates. "When office employees ask foolish questions about things they ought to know or should be able to find out, I have little faith in their ability," he explained. "For a stenographer to ask, 'What shall I do about this?' when it is something within her province, shows lack of initiative. But when a girl brings that same problem to me and says, 'This seems to be wrong. I suggest that we handle it this way. Do you approve?' I know she has done some think-

ing about the matter. After a few such proofs of an employee's ability to see things through, I have confidence to let her go ahead on other similar problems."

Adaptability is a trait that business expects without question. The rule is that employees must make the adjustment. So many workers, beginners and experienced persons alike, seem to expect the job to adjust itself to their pleasure, health, hours, and whims. A postmaster in charge of 800 clerical employees complained to me recently that the incoming workers often expect everything to be changed to suit their ideas. Those who are used to having the windows up object to the air conditioning. Others who have to stand to sort mail say that their arches will not stand the strain and they must work sitting down. "Do tell young people going to work that *they* must do the adjusting," this postmaster urged me. So be forewarned! Then too, there is ample evidence that in times of retrenchment those who are known for their gracious and pleasant adaptability under difficult conditions are the ones who are chosen to stay on.

### BEWARE GOSSIP!

Discretion is highly prized in business. And gossip—its exact opposite—is a vicious habit. Worse yet, office gossip can be a most contagious disease. One or two older employees, who long ago acquired the habit of gossiping about everything and everybody in a business, can infect an entire organization. But sometimes beginners fall into careless habits of talking too much and in the wrong places through sheer thoughtlessness. Just remember that *all* information acquired on the job is confidential. However small a cog in the wheel you may be, you will do well to copy the standard of the lawyer, the doctor, and the priest—who never "talk."

In New York I was told the story of Sue Wing who had a job as secretary to a motion picture executive. Sue was exceedingly proud of her post and talked about her job all the time. She even talked at lunch in a Broadway café with her friend Ann, who worked for a rival company. The price Sue's boss was

offering for a new Broadway production was exciting tea room chatter, and both girls felt very important to be discussing Big Business. But Ann took back to her office the news she had picked up. When his rival snatched the play right out from under his nose, Sue's boss nearly had apoplexy.

"There's a leak in this office," he roared. And Sue, forgetful of her too trusting chat with her friend Ann, was awfully, awfully hurt that suspicion should be fastened on her. Though the leak was never fully traced, Sue found herself gradually having less and less confidential work to do, and her altered position in the office finally made her so unhappy she left. A character trait kept Sue from making good.

A close mouth is as important within the office as on the outside. When gossip comes your way on your new job, smile if you have to listen, but be very sure you contribute nothing to it. And keep still after the chatter is over. Never pass along anything you hear, no matter what the temptation. Often the gossip is the "oldest inhabitant," who worked hard in the beginnings of the business and is now practically pensioned in a light job. Instead of being grateful, this individual resents demotion and compensates by trying to poison the minds of newcomers. According to him or her the organization is slipping. Sometimes the newcomer is intimidated by this attitude and length of service and feels he must not antagonize such a talebearer. In our next chapter we shall go more fully into how to handle such situations.

### **YOUR CHIEF'S AFFAIRS ARE CONFIDENTIAL, TOO**

And don't make the mistake of thinking it is allowable to discuss with other employees the things your immediate chief has discussed with or dictated to you. Not long ago I heard the story of Betty Mead who told the outer office the full particulars of everything her boss said or wrote. One day, when he had departed for the bank to see whether he could borrow money to meet some of his personal obligations, Betty regaled the office with that tale, too. Finally, an employee who had been there

longer decided the staff had had about all they wanted of that sort of disloyalty, and Betty was reported. Of course Betty was immediately dismissed. When Betty demanded to know who had "tattled" on her, she got little sympathy from her fellow workers.

### DISCRETION AT THE SWITCHBOARD

One of the most confidential positions in any firm is that of the switchboard operator. She is literally the custodian of the "affairs of men"—both business and private. If she is without discretion she can make trouble for everyone—including herself.irate wives of executives who plead night work, the touch for \$100 "quick" from the boss's spendthrift son, as well as the business of the firm and its clients—all are well known to her. I remember one instance during the years I had my own agency when the operator listened in and thought it would be amusing to have a little fun with what she heard. The next time the fiancé of one of my young women executives called on her, the operator addressed him as "*chéri*," even as she had heard him called over the phone. But her little fun had repercussions she would have been glad to avoid.

### WHERE TACT IS A MAJOR REQUIREMENT

And speaking of PBX operators, that other go-between of business—the receptionist—must have an extra amount of tact on hand. Here courtesy in small ways is most important. When, as a receptionist, you greet a caller with a pleasant, "Good morning, Mr. Jones, I'll tell Mr. Wood you are here," you have done well by your firm and yourself. There are few people above being flattered at being called spontaneously by their names. An unusual reversal of this general trait is illustrated by the case of Miriam Jones. Miriam presided at the combined switchboard and reception desk of a firm whose clients called often. One unfortunate man had the malodorous name of Stinklebotham and hated it. Miriam had been warned never to address him by name if she could help it and at least not to do so in a voice

that could be heard by other callers. But Miriam couldn't be bothered remembering instructions, faces, or names. She felt that, with such a double job, all that could be expected of her was to ask callers their names pleasantly. Unfortunately for her, Mr. Stinklebotham complained to Miriam's employers that he thought it was about time the girl on the reception desk knew him well enough not to have to ask his name. And Miriam lost her job to a more tactful employee.

### "THAT'S NOT MY JOB"

Willingness to work is a trait watched by executives—a trait that will certainly help you make good. Oftentimes, being willing to do a little more than is expected of you will make up for lack of experience, and ineptness in other things. And sometimes doing simple tasks that may seem beneath your job but that add to executives' comfort and peace of mind make those "higher-ups" positively lyrical in your praise. To illustrate this point: One of the best secretaries I ever knew was a young woman who, in addition to a college education and good secretarial training, was very domestic. She simply could not stand unhousewifely disorder. Although she was not only secretary to the president but office manager in charge of six girls, at certain times of the year when she was not very busy she saw to it that the offices had a thorough housecleaning. This sometimes meant she did it herself, since the janitor seldom could be inspired to do any extra scrubbing of desks and files. Her domesticity was a delight to her chief and it never occurred to anyone in the organization to scorn her for doing menial tasks. In fact, she was rather looked up to for her love of cleanliness. When she married and the office gave her a good-by party, someone presented her with a brush and a verse which started, "She came into our consciousness scrubbing."

But not everyone is big enough to do whatever comes to hand. A Chicago employment agency head told me about Ethel Holt, whom she had placed in a good stenographic job. One day Ethel



phoned her, in evident consternation. "They want me to clean out the safe. What would you do?" she demanded.

"Clean out the safe," said the employment agent curtly, and hung up. The belief that one has been employed to do only certain work is as false as Santa's whiskers. Not only is this a day of combination jobs, but when business has bought your time it expects you to do whatever needs to be done during business hours. That shortsighted stenographer should have reflected that probably she would not be asked to clean out the safe more than once in several years.

#### A DAY'S WORK IS EIGHT HOURS OR LESS

In many offices your willingness to work overtime has much to do with whether you make good. A stenographer wrote to ask me whether she should speak to an employer who consistently forgot that her day was supposed to be over at five o'clock. I wish this question could be answered by a "yes" or "no," but it is not so simple as that. There are times when you are so interested in your job that you yourself would elect to stay until you've balanced your books or until the last letter is ready to be mailed. But staying occasionally for fifteen minutes or half an hour longer is one thing and being expected to work an hour or so overtime every night is something else. I think asking regular overtime that is not paid for is both unreasonable and inconsiderate on the part of the employer. But such employers are gradually losing out. The eight-hour law in some states and the Federal Wages and Hours Law for firms engaged in interstate commerce are correcting the ways of the employer who considers a day should hold ten working hours for everybody.

If you have no legal protection as to hours, you will have to work out this matter of overtime for yourself, unless you are working under a supervisor, as in a central stenographic bureau. In such well-organized offices, employees are sometimes asked to work overtime, in a rush piece of work, or when an executive needs something to take out of town. But when the work gets to the point where it cannot be done in everybody's eight-hour

day, more help is put on. If a business deals in interstate commerce and so comes under the Wages and Hours Law, supervisors and office managers are careful to prevent overtime, or if overtime is unavoidable they pay for it as required by law. Many high-class firms that do not come under the Wages and Hours Law nevertheless conform to its specifications and pay for all overtime.

Usually the necessity for working overtime is due to faulty organization somewhere along the line. The president of a large advertising agency once said to me he had little use for employees who were not ready to leave at closing time. His point was that the individual whose day was properly laid out for him, or self-planned, should have a clear desk, without overtime, except under special circumstances. Another executive told me he had found that some employees could do twice as much work as others. "They don't do it by coming early, or lingering after hours, either," he explained. "They simply tie right down to concentrated work from nine to five."

### KEEP THE CORNERS OF YOUR MOUTH UP

Remember the old saying, "Honey catches more flies than vinegar"? It goes without saying that an agreeable person is more likely to make good than is the grouch, the fuss-budget, or the "sourpuss." If employers had their way, they would always be surrounded by cheerful people. No doubt you have heard of the secretary who in her efficiency fairly scolds her boss as though he were her erring child. Privileged employees, because of long years of service of incalculable value to their employers, may be permitted such idiosyncrasies; but, as a beginner, no such privileges are in store for you. Young people who are not cheerful are too easy to replace.

For two years I had traveling with me as secretary and stage assistant a girl whose expression and manner were unfailingly cheery. I asked her once how she managed it. It seems that her dramatic teacher had told her that Ina Claire attributed much of her stage success to the fact she kept the corners of her

mouth turned up. So my assistant had worked at it and, in spite of enough family troubles to turn her mouth corners away down, had achieved a smiling serenity. Her popularity with everyone we encountered in traveling 50,000 miles was proof that the system was good.

### DON'T BE A "KNOW-IT-ALL"

Antagonizing an employer never helped anyone to make good. I've known beginners who insisted that the way they were taught to do things in school was the only way, and who made quite an issue of following the already established methods of their employers. The truth was that they were in no position to know whether or not the systems or methods they were suggesting would apply. But it is not only beginners who are guilty on this score. No worse pest exists in the business world than the new employee with plenty of experience who wants to install the methods used in the last place he or she worked. "But they were so much better," these tactless persons plead. Until newcomers have won their spurs and made themselves and their ideas respected, they haven't a chance of inaugurating any new ways of doing things, no matter how good. At this point their cue is to take orders and wait. If they make good, their time will come. When it does they can tactfully suggest changes, and they will probably be listened to on the strength of their own performance.

### OUTGOING CALLS COST ACTUAL CASH

In speaking of your first day in business, I mentioned the importance of punctuality and of cooperation regarding lunch hours. These are only two of the office rules and policies that you must observe. Each business has many more, and it is well to keep your eyes and ears open to find out what they are. One inevitable rule is, "No personal telephone calls at the office unless for emergencies."

Sickness, accident, or death in your home circle are almost the only occasions that justify your being called to the telephone

unless you have an office of your own. Even then, unless you are an executive, a minimum of telephone calls is the rule. Beginners often rebel at this regulation, because up to the moment of employment their social life has come first. Now it must definitely take second place. You should tell your friends to call you at home in the evening. They will if you insist upon it. You have no right to waste office time with personal telephone conversations. They not only take time, but they also take your mind off your work. Instead of thinking it will make you appear popular in the eyes of your fellow workers to receive many telephone calls during office hours, realize that by so doing you are laying your private life open to everybody about you. This is quite as unwise as having others annoyed by your chattering phone calls. After all, the office phone is there for office business.

It is equally undesirable for you to place personal calls from the office. Not only does this, too, interrupt your work, but every call you make costs your firm several cents. Multiply the number of employees by three cents and see what one call a day by everyone in a large office would do to the company's telephone bill. Do you wonder at such a rule?

If, in spite of all your best efforts, you do occasionally receive a personal telephone call at the office, handle it with judgment. Especially if there is someone in the room, cut it short. Say as soon as you can, "I'm busy now. Call me this evening," or "I'll call you at noon." It will save you the embarrassment of carrying on a telephone conversation in the presence of someone else, and it will also give a tip to the person who calls you that such interruptions of your work are unwelcome.

### SMOKING AND GUM CHEWING

Practically every business has a definite policy regarding smoking. Either the employees are allowed to smoke on the job or they are not. Sometimes the ruling applies alike to men and women; sometimes the men are allowed to smoke at their desks and the women are not. In some organizations women employees are not permitted to smoke, even in the dressing room. This

is not usually because of any prudish objections but because the stenographic force has abused the privilege and taken too much time out for their midmorning and midafternoon cigarettes.

If you are a smoker, by all means find out what is permissible before you light up. You can observe what the others do and follow their example. But be cautious, for it is possible that some employees are ignoring the unspoken wishes of the management and smoking when they are not supposed to. You can't afford to take any chances. As soon as possible find out the rule and, if it is "no smoking," observe it, regardless of your own opinions and your habits. Furthermore, it's not good policy to complain about office rules and regulations.

To date I haven't heard of any organization having a definite rule against gum chewing, but the practice is frowned upon in all high-grade offices. The chewing of gum, especially when done in the executive car, is offensive to most people. Regardless of your own opinion or your habits away from your job, remember that to executives gum chewing is not good behavior in business hours. Persistence in this habit, if those you work for feel very strongly on the subject, can lose you your job. I've never heard of its helping anyone to make good in business or to win promotion.

#### SELF-EXAMINATION A GOOD CHECK

Do not waste too much time in your early working months hoping for promotion. You must make good on the job you have, before you can be in line for anything better. In an article in *The Saturday Evening Post*, several years ago, Loire Brophy, who is a well-known employment counselor in New York, gives business aspirants some sound advice. Among other things, she suggests a frequent self-catechism on the job. She lists questions you should put to yourself on the very topics we have been discussing in this chapter:

Am I looking for extra duties, or am I content to do only the work at hand?

Am I big enough to do little jobs?

Am I willing to help the other fellow out?

Scrupulous honesty in answering these questions, Mrs. Brophy feels, will put you in a position to know whether or not you are making good.

Another question you should ask yourself is, "What is my job for?" I once heard of a young woman who, when asked what the typing she did was used for, replied: "I don't know. My work goes to Mary at the next desk." Employees like this are scarcely more than human stencils. No matter how humble your first position is, you should try to see it from the perspective of the whole business. So be alert and ask yourself:

What relation has my work to that of others around me?  
What other jobs are just like mine?  
What is the next job ahead?  
Could I fill it?

#### STEPS TOWARD ADVANCEMENT

A possible opportunity for promotion within your present grasp is to learn as soon as you can, without jeopardizing your own work, how to do the job just ahead. Sometimes a sudden illness, a marriage, a death, or other emergency will cause a vacancy at that desk. Then the management asks, "Whom have we who knows how to do this work?" If you have been willing to help out occasionally at that desk in a rush period or have observed and questioned the person working there, you may be the one who will step into a better job.

But, for six months or a little longer, let these be your objectives: to be as useful as possible and to get valuable experience just where you are. As Elihu Root, Jr., put it in a commencement address to seniors at Cooper Union: "Hitch your wagon to the job in hand. Doing that job absolutely as well as you can is what brings competence and character and recognition and also, if you will permit me, happiness." By proving your ability in the job you have, no matter how small, you are paving the way for bigger and better successes.

**WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?**

And having proved yourself in this first job, you should be able to know what your next move is. During these six months you have had plenty of opportunity to think and plan, to size up your vocational assets in the light of the job you are doing. Is the work you will be happiest in, and do best, to be found in the organization you are already working for? If it is, fine! Go after it. If in all honesty you must confess that you don't want to go ahead in this kind of work, make up your mind to make a change as soon as possible. But go slowly, and lay your plans carefully. You are going to stay in the second job some time, we hope. So do not take it on as casually as perhaps you did your first one. That plan for your business life, which we discussed in the first chapter, should be brought out and dusted off. Then ask yourself:

How does my plan look now that I have had actual experience?

Have my ideas changed?

Do I like working in the type of business I am in?

What other possibilities have opened up in the light of experience?

**TAKE YOUR TIME**

Look at your work and your future from all angles before you rush on to the next thing. Be sure you are ready for that next step up. Recently a young friend of mine, who is just beginning in a wholesale house, said to me: "I am sick of having people talk to me about the bottom of the ladder, and how I must take slow steps up. Bottom rung? Today I am actually sweeping out the floor under the bottom rung."

The other side of that coin is represented by what the personnel director of a department store said to me the same day: "I like to employ college graduates, and I do. But often I wish that I could get them to realize they must first accept the regimentation of business, that they must be patient while they learn, as we are

patient with them. Then more of them would go far. But as it is, too many of them after six months expect to be put in charge of departments, and they aren't ready. They have plenty of starting power, but they seem to lack staying power." For example, the job cycle of some young business beginners goes somewhat like this:

1. Enthusiasm for job, firm, and bosses
2. Enthusiasm cools
3. Criticism surmounts enthusiasm
4. Dissatisfaction sets in
5. Slipshod attitude toward job begins
6. Quits or is fired

Perhaps the lack of staying power is because, until they finish school, young people change their situation about every six months. A new term opens, a vacation period begins, or they graduate from one class into the next every few months of the year. But business progress is marked by no such abrupt changes; it comes quietly and steadily. So, when you begin to be restless without due cause, strive with all your might to develop staying power. It may be all you need to push you up very shortly onto the next rung of the ladder.

Perhaps, as you read, you are wondering how you will know whether or not you are making progress. I frequently get such questions in my mail. Don't worry. If you are not called on the carpet for errors, you may know your work is satisfactory. Your best gauge of success will not be the fulsomeness of praise but the nonexistence of blame. And then, there are those twin glories—promotion and a larger pay check!

### QUESTIONS

1. In beginning office jobs, why do young women, more than young men, need to remember that a new crop of business graduates is coming along each year?
2. Can beginners expect special consideration from employers because of their youth and inexperience?
3. What, in addition to skills, will you need on your first job?



4. Why must employees strictly observe office regulations as to punctuality in arriving at work? As to a specified lunch hour?

5. The survey *Why They Couldn't Hold Their Jobs* shows that carelessness was the chief cause for the dismissal of office workers. Why do you think this trait headed the list?

6. What businesslike habits will help you make good? What character traits win an employer's confidence?

7. Why is the first day on a new job different from other working days? Why does the fact that the position is your very first make a good beginning especially important to you?

8. Why is it important to remember the names of people you meet in business?

9. On a new job will you make the adjustments to conditions as you find them? Or will you expect the employer to adjust everything to suit you?

10. Should you talk about office business on the outside? What about discussing with other employees information you acquire in the day's work?

11. Why do employers prefer cheerful employees? Can the habit of turning up the corners of your mouth be cultivated?

12. What has the Wages and Hours Law done to make working conditions easier for many office employees?

13. If you think you know of a better way of doing something, should you insist that your new employer change to your method?

14. When you work in an office are you expected to do any odd jobs that may come up?

15. Is it ethical to use office supplies, especially stamps, for personal use?

16. Do you think business is justified in expecting that office employees should have the same standard regarding confidential matters as the doctor, lawyer, or priest?

17. When your enthusiasm for a new job cools, should you quit?

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss whether on your first job it is advisable to excuse yourself for any slowness or mistakes by saying

a. "I can't be expected to know everything."

b. "I'm sorry. I see what was wrong, and I will correct it."

c. "This is all new to me. I need time to learn."

2. How do you account for the fact that only 10 per cent of the office employees covered by the survey *Why They Couldn't Hold Their Jobs* were dismissed for lack of skills, whereas 90 per cent lost their jobs because of character traits? Does this mean that skills are unimportant? It is often true that lack of skill in doing one's work frequently sets the stage for a burst of temper or some other character defect and causes dismissal. In such cases, is it lack of skill or a character defect that is the primary cause of losing one's job?

3. Based on the knowledge of business you have acquired through your office practice course, mention some of the situations in which carelessness could easily occur.

4. What character traits will be most helpful in getting you through the difficult period of adjustment to your first job?

5. Many students who could do better work are satisfied to slide through school on a C average. Discuss what such young people can do for themselves when they encounter the A — requirement of business.

6. Discuss the advantages of beginning in a routine job. The disadvantages.

7. If you find your first job not nearly so interesting as you expect it to be, will you

- a. Quit and look for another job?
- b. Revise your ideas and adjust to the work?
- c. Study on the outside and equip yourself for a more congenial office position?

Be prepared to give sound reasons for your choice.

8. Suppose a personal friend calls you at the office to make a luncheon date. The call comes when you are receiving instructions from your supervisor. What will you say to your friend? Will you later discourage this friend from telephoning you at the office?

9. If you are a smoker and go to work for a company that has a "no smoking" rule, would you feel justified in "sneaking" one now and then, especially if you saw older employees doing so?

10. Some beginners are credited with thinking that office work is *play* and of handling themselves as if it were. Others expect working to be *fun* and are disappointed when it is not. You sometimes hear business spoken of as a *game*. Do you think these terms are correct as applied to business?

11. How can you use your first job as a means of appraising your vocational assets? In relation to your career plan, why is your second job more important than your first?

12. Julia Kelly is private secretary to the president of a corporation. Her friends say of her, "You could know Julia for a thousand years and never know anything about her boss's business." Do you think this same discretion is necessary in a minor typing, clerical, or stenographic position? Should a PBX operator be close-mouthed about what she hears over the wire? Why?

13. A chewing-gum manufacturer is said to have conducted tests among his office employees which go to prove that office workers who chew gum on the job

- a. Get more work done.
- b. Do not go to sleep after lunch.
- c. Have less indigestion.

In view of most employers' objections to gum chewing, do you think these arguments would be valid excuses for continuing to chew gum during working hours?

### PROJECTS

1. Suppose you have been engaged to go to work next Monday morning as a stenographer-clerk. In anticipation of your first day, make a memo covering

- a. Questions you may need to ask about your work
- b. Information you should get about office regulations
- c. Warnings against pitfalls for which you should be on the lookout

2. In the survey reproduced here *noncooperation* and *laziness* ranked high as causes for dismissal. Name the positive traits that are the direct opposites of these negative qualities. Write a 1,000-word paper explaining how these desirable traits would help a stenographer hold her job.

3. Based on your knowledge of yourself and of your attitude toward work at home and in school, rate yourself on the three questions asked on page 266.

Allow  $33\frac{1}{3}$  points for each question. If you fall below 25 on any of the three questions, how will you go about improving yourself in these traits in advance of going to work?

4. Prepare a 500-word paper enlarging upon the following statement in your text: "But for six months or a little longer, let these be your objectives: to be as useful as possible and to get valuable experience just where you are."

## CHAPTER XI

### GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

By this time you have doubtless realized there is much more to making good than knowing how to be useful in a business office. In the last chapter you had a glimpse of how devastating such things as gossiping and making dates on the office phone can be to your career. But now let's go a step further and consider the art of getting along with those with whom you work. For the truth is, it is often the human relationships in business that make or break you—the daily give and take between employer and employee, between one worker and another.

If only we could all be as impersonal as the typewriters and adding machines, how simple it would be! But how very dull, too! Conditions being what they are, I sometimes wonder if the very typewriter keys don't feel the nervous tension, the strain, the hurt feelings, the jealousies—the whole emotional undercurrent.

The remedy for most cases of office nerves is, of course, the mastering of a technique for getting along with all these other people who labor under the same tension you do. If you are to get on in a job, you have to get on with your superiors, your equals, and those below you in the ranks. Fortunately, it is a technique that can be cultivated.

One hears a great deal these days about "attitudes." You may be very much liked for your attitudes, or hated, criticized, and even ostracized because of them. They're that important. Your attitude toward your job, your employer, and other employees is as vital to your progress as how well you do the work. And how right or wrong your attitude is determines to a great extent how well you synchronize with both the personnel and the pay roll. Knowing how business feels on this point, placement

bureaus are now searching back into school records. They find that, for better or for worse, the all-important behavior traits usually exist during student days.

### ONE'S ATTITUDE IN SCHOOL COUNTS

While I was doing employment interviewing in New York City, I frequently telephoned a business school to find out about recent graduates. The school's verdict was a great help to me when I was considering a young man or woman for a job. When the reply was, "Our teachers found Miss Brown very cooperative and adaptable," or "Mr. Owen was both reliable and even-tempered when here," I felt very safe in sending them out on interviews. And how regretfully I ceased to try to place an applicant about whose attitude I had been forewarned

One private business school in the Pacific Northwest has the word "attitude" printed on the student record forms used by its placement bureau. I asked the placement director whether she judged the graduates' attitudes in her interviews with them or relied on the teachers for information. "Their school records are valuable, of course," she replied. "But you'd be surprised how much they unconsciously reveal when they come to me, just before they graduate, to talk about jobs. The student who is alert, eager, and cooperative shows it in his whole bearing, no matter how little he says. He or she gets a rating of 'good.' But if a student is indifferent, lackadaisical, and uninterested during the interview, I naturally write 'poor.' Everything else falls in between with a 'fair.'"

Your school and your placement bureau will do everything they can to help you. *Their* attitude toward *you* is cooperative in the extreme. But they are powerless to help you if you don't give them good material to work with. In other words, you must do your part, too.

### YOU ARE BEING WATCHED AND JUDGED

Your attitude toward business is important. But it is something about which a personnel director says nothing at the time

you are employed. You will be told what your duties are to be, and usually the office rules will be explained to you. But no one will say to you, "Unless your attitude is good you won't last long here." It is assumed that you have what it takes. Nonetheless you are on trial in this respect. Approval will bring no pats on the back from your superiors, and disapproval may bring dismissal without warning. Those on your own level are watching you, too. If they feel you need to change your attitude, they will often find a way to make you conform to their group standards.

Perhaps you are wondering of what an undesirable attitude consists. Let me illustrate. The popular indoor sport of soldiering on the job is a poor attitude. The world seems to be full of persons of low energy or congenital laziness who slide through life with a minimum of effort. When they arrive on the business scene, as they frequently do, their chief concern seems to be to see how little work they can do and still hold the job. Often this attitude is deliberate, but I think it is also at times unconscious. If the culprit is so fortunate as to hold a job under a superior with a great deal of perception, and is willing to try to correct his faults, his job is saved for him. But as a rule there is no one to pamper business babies of this type.

When I had a business of my own, I once engaged a young man to write publicity articles. He was regularly employed as a reporter on a morning newspaper, and what I paid him was so much "velvet" for him. Very shortly after he began to work for me, his writing began to deteriorate, and I was puzzled as to the cause. Because I knew him to be a good writer, I tried to be patient and see whether his work would not come back to normal. But one day I entered the office just in time to hear him say to another employee, "This story isn't very good, but I guess it will get by her all right." It didn't. What folly to take the attitude that any position calls for only perfunctory work!

#### REMEMBER, "TIME IS MONEY"

One form of "getting by" is stealing time. There are offices that are so kind about time out that the employees abuse their

privileges. Some years ago I was an executive in an organization where the stenographers were so leniently handled that each of them had adopted the practice of taking off from a half to a full day each week. They had found they could get away with murder, and they were doing it. A new office manager summarily cut their two-hour lunch periods and their days off. And were they aggrieved!

My prize experience with time stealing was the case of a copy writer in my own advertising agency who, because he occasionally did some night work, imposed on his privileges to the limit regarding his morning hours. One day I happened to observe that he arrived for work about ten, went to his private office and typed busily for a few minutes, and then put on his hat and departed. I asked the operator if he had said where he was going and when he would be back. "Oh," she answered, "I'm sure Mr. Erwin went out to breakfast. He usually does about this time." I was curious to know what copy he could pound out so quickly. Imagine my further interest when I discovered he had started a poem entitled, "Dawn Comes to the City." We had a little talk, Mr. Erwin and I, which resulted in our mutual agreement that he might better observe the arrival of the morning from his home or someone else's office thereafter.

The easiest way to check up on yourself as to whether you are acquiring the time-stealing habit is to ask yourself a few pertinent questions:

- Am I doing all the job requires?
- Am I willing to do more than my share of a cooperative task?
- Am I ever satisfied with slipshod work?
- Am I looking around for more work to fill my spare time or am I trying to drag out my work to kill time?

Honest answers to these and similar questions will quickly reassure you or warn you as to where you stand.

### COOPERATION IS VALUED

Another unfortunate attitude met frequently in business is "that's not my work." Whenever there is an extra piece of



work, such as typing a thousand envelopes to send out a form letter, there is someone who will say huffily, "That's not my work. I was employed to be Mr. Green's secretary." How much better to take the point of view that every least thing you can do to grease the machinery of the business that is paying your salary not only makes you more valuable as an employee but furthers your own business education and skill. Never mind how mechanical and uninteresting the task is. I know a brilliant woman who for many years until she retired was assistant to the manager of a large importing house. She began her career as a saleswoman. Whenever there was a difficult or disagreeable job to be done that nobody relished, she had a habit of saying, "Oh, let me do that." Her interest and enthusiasm for learning everything pertaining to the business carried her right to the top in a very short time. I have known both young men and women to make good full-time jobs out of part-time work by digging up and doing tasks which other employees were side-stepping. Business is quick to recognize and, whenever it can, to reward such initiative.

University business offices tell me they have a great deal of trouble on this point. Administrators feel that everyone is on the pay roll of the university itself and should do any work that will be of benefit to the corporate employer. However, many university office employees resent such requirements and feel entirely justified in maintaining that they are working for certain individuals or for a specified department. This attitude is, of course, the exact opposite of the willingness to work that is expected in business, be it educational or otherwise.

#### PLEASURE BEFORE BUSINESS?

Have you ever met the employee who shrugs his shoulders and says, "I should worry, I'm not being paid to kill myself"? After you get into the business world you will find one of his stripe in at least every second office. If this person is a young woman, she is apt to be a charmer who is much more interested in her dates and her outside successes than in whether she makes good on her job. Her sole interest in her work is her pay check. Her identical twin, as far as attitude goes, is the employee who com-

plains, "I wish the work would slack up." Somewhat shortsighted, surely, since when the work lets up there will be fewer employees.

### THEY BUCK THE FIRST RULE IN BUSINESS

Then there are the "know-it-alls." These people, regardless of their status in business, object to taking orders from anyone. They overlook the first rule of business: *You are only as important as your job, and you must take orders from anyone in the office who is over you in authority.* Some of these individuals know so much that they even object to taking orders from the boss himself. Not long ago I was waiting at a bus station when commuters were homeward bound. Near me was a group of young girls, apparently on their first jobs. One very pretty girl remarked that she had quit that day.

"Why?" the others chorused.

"We didn't get along. Mr. Smith was too bossy."

"But wasn't he the boss?" one girl asked.

"Oh yes," the quitter said, "but he was unreasonable. I was out three days last week, but I had told him in advance. Today I said I was going to take Tuesday off, and he said, 'Please make up your mind whether you want to work or not,'"

So she had decided she didn't want to work—there. The silence of her friends showed that they disapproved of her attitude.

### HURT FEELINGS AND MOODINESS TABOO

Many of those sensitive souls for whom this world is too, too cruel are thrust into business offices. Unless they make a quick adjustment, they are likely to have a pretty hard time. Their feelings are always being hurt. Someone is advanced over them; a special piece of work is assigned to someone else; somebody gives a party to which they are not asked or confides a juicy bit of gossip to another member of the office force and leaves them out. Or they do what they think is an outstanding piece of work, and no one compliments them on it. They are constantly looking for offense, and naturally they find plenty. But Mama isn't there to "kiss the bump and make it well," and the sooner they

snap out of their "spoiled darling" attitude, the sooner they will regard the business world as a thrilling and exciting place, and the happier they will be.

Then there is the moody person, who is up one day and down the next. Often he illustrates the high cost of feeling low. If you are cursed with such a temperament, begin now to discipline yourself. After you go to work it is rather late to learn, even by bitter experience, that moodiness is most unwelcome in offices. The staff is the well-oiled machinery that keeps a business moving smoothly and, as a cog in the machine, you too must keep well oiled and running evenly; otherwise you will be discarded for a better "part."

#### **"YESSERS" AND CLOCK WATCHERS SELDOM GO FAR**

And there are many other types of persons whose attitude in business is deplorable. There is the "yes-man." Though it is flattering, even to executives, to be agreed with, an overdose of yessing becomes a great bore. Only in Hollywood, if carrier pigeons tell true, does yessing produce big salaries. To succeed, one has to grow with the job, and to be eternally yessing someone is not conducive to mental growth. And how can a "yesser" ever learn to make decisions on his own, as he must in order to become an executive?

As a final example of an undesirable attitude, there is the clock watcher. He begins putting his work away about four o'clock every afternoon in order to be certain he will be ready to leave the office at the stroke of five. If he expressed it in words, he could not more plainly say he doesn't care whether he has a job or not. Actually, many times he knows only too well that the loss of his job would have the direst consequences. But it never occurs to the "clock-eyed" that there is anything wrong with his skimping on time. If you pointed it out to him he'd say, "What are a few minutes at the end of the day?" Actually, these few minutes day in and day out add up to more than a full day's work a month. Would you like to be docked a day's pay for such a practice?

The nation's largest employer, Uncle Sam, recently rebelled against the early quitting practice of many Government employees. In a circular sent to the various Government Offices in Washington, Fred H. Brown, Comptroller General, said:

It is observed, that some of our employees stop work before official quitting time, apparently for the purpose of making themselves ready to leave the building exactly when the bell rings. It is a rule of this office that all employees shall be at their stations of duty at the time set for work to begin and render seven hours of faithful service.

### RIGHT ATTITUDES

So much for negative attitudes. For every one of them there is a positive attitude that goes far to win success. Perhaps the best one of these is interest. Not only interest in your work but interest in life in general and a friendly but not too personal interest in those about you. And along with interest goes enthusiasm. Both of these must be at an even tempo which can be maintained. It is of no use to start off with the greatest interest and enthusiasm and, after a short time, slow down. These qualities are like typing and dictation speeds—they must be sustained day in and day out. Many beginners find this difficult after the novelty has worn off. They become restless, and distant fields look greener. They are very sure a different kind of job somewhere else would hold their interest and enthusiasm much better.

### GOOD ATTITUDES HELP YOU GROW

Now for some positive attitudes that win approval. Taking an interest in and generating enthusiasm over the job you have can do more toward making the work interesting than anything else I know. This definitely is one attitude that can be cultivated. When your family and friends ask you how you like the new job, say, "It's swell," even if in your heart of hearts it seems a bit dreary at the moment. Tell them the good things you find in the job and, surprisingly, you will soon see more things to praise. When you are interested in everything about you, you automatically become a more interesting person yourself. You

actually extend your personality, about which I shall have more to say in a later chapter. And interest begets interest. Soon you will find yourself reading articles about business in general and gathering information that will be of great value to you in your job.

The brother of a friend of mine went to work in the sales department of an engineering firm several years ago. Shortly after he had started, he told his sister there would never be any opportunity for him with this organization. He explained that all the other salesmen said so, and certainly they ought to know. "Most of them who have been there for years and years are getting about the same salary they started with." My friend, who was an experienced businesswoman, told her young brother to stop listening to the complainers. "Of course they haven't got anywhere," she said. "No one ever does who spends all his time condemning the company for which he works. It's a good job. Keep an alert, interested attitude and you'll get somewhere right over their heads." Her prophecy proved true, for by changing his attitude her brother made rapid strides and became assistant sales manager within a very few years.

No doubt, when we were talking just now about undesirable attitudes, you noticed that many of them expressed the very antithesis of cooperation. Anyone who tries to get by, who refuses to do work because it is not strictly speaking *his* work, or who feels too good for the job is certainly not cooperative. You know what happens in football or baseball if there is no teamwork. In business, just as in athletics, you have to play the game to win—and teamwork helps.

### THE WINNING TEAM

And what team are you going to choose? Will you join those who are discontented with their work? Or will you join those who see a future for themselves in loyal teamwork with the management? I often wonder why so many employees regard the management of business as their natural enemy. Office supervisors tell me that, although they wish to do much for employees, they often find a barrier has been erected between

them by the workers themselves. Some employees seem to feel it is impossible for the heads of business to have the workers' welfare at heart. So, without waiting to learn the situation, they take the attitude of being "ag'in the government" from the day they go to work. There is, of course, a managerial point of view, which is of necessity different from that of the employees. The responsibility of pay rolls to meet, of rent to pay, of work to be completed on time and done well regardless of whether the business is making a profit creates burdens that few employees would be willing to shoulder themselves.

A little imagination about such things will give you an appreciation of the problems of the men for whom you work. And imagination transformed into cooperation will pay dividends to both you and the business. You can be cooperative by being thankful every day that you have work for which you are paid regularly. You can show this gratitude by pleasantly giving a full day's work for a full day's pay. You can be cooperative by subordinating your own opinions about how the business should be run. You can be cooperative by doing without complaint the things the management asks you to do for the good of the business as a whole. That's what teamwork in business means.

#### AND YOUR TEAMMATES

Cooperation with the office force is just as helpful to your future as cooperation with the management. Take the matter of vacation schedules as an example. Usually vacation periods are left for the employees to arrange among themselves, subject to the approval of the management. It is customary, naturally, for heads of departments to have first choice and then on down the line. A friend of mine who is advertising manager in a furniture store said to me recently, "I can't do what I had planned to on my vacation this year, because one of my artists insists on going at the only time I could conveniently carry out my plan." I was aghast at a subordinate's taking such an attitude and said so. "Never mind," my friend replied. "I held that girl's job for her when she was ill last spring. But I'm all through now.

If she can't cooperate any better than that, I'll replace her as soon as it is convenient," That is the way it is in business. Nothing may be said when you strike a sour note, but the circumstances are remembered and tell against you in the end.

### BE STRICTLY IMPERSONAL FROM NINE TO FIVE

An impersonal attitude in business is a great asset. For the most part this means not injecting the personal into business relationships. Any display of emotion during business hours is considered very bad form. Regardless of how much you may be worried about outside personal matters you must not show it while at business. Neither must you let your likes and dislikes of persons or types of work interfere with your day's output. Business expects everyone to do his or her work with a strictly objective point of view. Nor does business care to have employees constantly trying to attract attention to themselves by their bursts of temperament, their overhilarious manner, or their conspicuous dress. In fact, personal idiosyncrasies of all kinds, however minor, are taboo because they create a disturbing element, and business seeks to maintain a calm routine that is without interruption. You can well understand that such an atmosphere works for the benefit of all by minimizing the possibility of frayed nerves and tired brains.

### TAKE CRITICISM WITH A SMILE

To be able to take criticism constructively is the ultimate test of how big a person you are. Not long ago an employer who is an editor said to me, "I fear I am going to have to get a new secretary. The one I have is wonderful, as far as her work goes, but she can't take criticism. I have to spend five or ten minutes figuring out how to tell her that the punctuation in a letter is incorrect. Unless I am very polite about it, she sulks. Punctuation is either right or it isn't, and I must have a secretary to whom I can say, 'this punctuation is wrong,' and have her correct it pleasantly with no further ado." There it is again, storm

clouds gathering for an employee who is as yet entirely unaware that anything is wrong.

But there is even more to it than taking deserved criticism calmly. Many times in business, criticism is unwarranted. Not every executive is a fair person, and many are not above taking out on a subordinate some hang-over of disagreeableness developed, perhaps, when his senior in command took it out on him. Unfortunately there is nothing you can do about executive bad temper. You have to be able to "take it," but you can't return it in kind.

### BE LOYAL OR QUIT

And need I tell you that a loyal attitude toward the firm for which you work is a cardinal virtue? It doesn't matter in the least whether you privately think the firm worthy of loyalty. As long as you work there you must be deaf, dumb, and blind to its weaknesses. Or at the very least dumb. Sometimes it is very difficult to be loyal, to believe that everything the management does is right, and to say so when called upon for comment. For the employer is not always right or even admirable. Sometimes you know this from things you learn through your work. As a bookkeeper, for instance, you might be asked to falsify a tax statement. What to do?

I have heard of businesses that thought more of an employee who, under such circumstances, stood up for what he thought was right; and I have known of instances where the protester was dismissed for not carrying out orders for dishonest work. A young teacher lost an administrative position in which he had distinguished himself, for such a reason. His county superintendent wished him to accept a salary for supplementary teaching in one school, even though he did not teach, so that she might divert his administrative salary to political uses. Meanwhile he would continue working in her office but would not be officially listed on her staff. When he refused she branded him uncooperative, not wishing, naturally, to reveal why she was dismissing him. Since he did not think it chivalrous to expose dishonesty in a



woman, he had difficulty in finding another job. But truth does prevail, and eventually the young educator's record was cleared.

So, if you find yourself in a position where you feel you cannot give your employer unstinted loyalty, you would do better to look for another job at the first opportunity. Life is too short to waste much of it working for a firm of which you cannot speak well, or which you cannot honestly admire. Since you would not "bite the hand that feeds you," keep still until such time as you can secure employment with a business that is worthy of your admiration and loyalty. But be sure you do not take the word of disgruntled employees for dishonest practices that may not exist. Wait until you know positively that things are not right before you put yourself out of a job.

#### GO SLOWLY ON OFFICE FRIENDSHIPS

But this matter of getting along with others where you work is not entirely a matter of attitudes, important as they are. The personal equation has to be taken into account every moment of every working day. For instance, the question of office friendships is always bobbing up. Beginners especially are apt to think that to get along they must at once get chummy with all the other employees. Nothing could be farther from the truth. You will be fortunate if in your entire business life you make three or four real friends who work where you do. For, after all, the same rules should hold in business as apply in any other situation. Friends should be chosen because of mutual tastes and interests. Unless you have something more in common than the happenings of the business day you are apt to find the companionship of office mates unstimulating, if not tiresome.

And don't worry about holding aloof. In the long run it will do your status in the office no harm. You must, of course, be pleasant and cooperative at all times. But the thing to do is to ask no favors and paddle your own canoe. If you are criticized for not getting chummy, what of it? Until you are very sure you want to mix socially with the office crowd, a little criticism is easier to bear than the difficulty of getting out of a situation

that becomes clearly more undesirable the deeper you get into it. The minute you begin to make friends with the office force you will have to contribute to showers for all the brides-elect, go to parties that may bore you, and go home to dinner with associates only to find you have nothing in common but office personalities. And then you will have to return these courtesies or be in worse favor than before.

### **FORMALITY IS GOOD FORM IN OFFICES**

As for first names—don't rush that either. Even though you hear others in the office being called by their first names, you need not join the practice now, or ever perhaps. Wait until someone calls you by your first name; then, if you like, reciprocate. A certain formality as to names is preferable during office hours. Even though you call your equals by their first names outside, you should always speak of them as Miss Blank and Mr. Blank in the office. Also you should so address them in the presence of others.

Many executives proudly state that "our employees are just like one big family." If you go to work for such a man, there will be times when you will have to mix socially with your fellow workers. A firm with this policy usually gives an annual picnic or a dance or two during the winter. And there is almost certain to be a Christmas party. Of course you go and have the very best time you possibly can! Anything else would brand you as a snob and be most discourteous besides. On these occasions executives and subordinates often meet on an equal footing. Just remember that Cinderella's coach turns back into a pumpkin when she enters the office the next morning. If the boss has seemed your Prince Charming, or the boss's daughter your Lady Fair during the evening, neither of them expects you to remember it after the party is over.

### **HANDLE AN OFFICE ROMANCE DISCREETLY**

Practically everything I have said about office friendships applies equally to office romances. Girls still go to business

hoping they will "meet someone." Sometimes they do. But, having observed for years various budding, prospering, and blasted office romances, I believe it is much better to do your dancing and dating with someone who works somewhere else. If for any reason a romance curdles on you, how much easier it is to handle the ensuing unpleasantness if your discarded love is not working at the next desk to yours. But if you must date from your office, keep still about it. Chattering about "he said" and "I said" and "she said" can make a lot of trouble and often writes "finis" to a romantic chapter.

One business girl complained to me that a young man from the firm where she worked took her to the movies quite often, but he asked her to say nothing about it at the office. She resented what appeared to her as rather an uncomplimentary secrecy. But she felt better about it when I assured her he showed excellent judgment and real chivalry in wanting to protect their friendship from gossip both innocent and malicious.

### HIS HONOR, THE BOSS

And now we come to that most important topic of all, *how to get along with the boss*. An entire book could be written on this subject. In fact, I did devote a whole chapter to it in my book *Manners in Business*. But even in a volume given entirely to a description of bosses, you might not find the employers you may draw in the business lottery. For of course no two employers are alike, and you have to be quick of wit and deft of hand in adapting yourself to the one for whom you work.

The words "employer" and "boss" as I use them here do not necessarily mean the head of the firm. If you go to work in a very large organization you may never meet that august individual in the flesh. The Big Boss may be an impressive, well-dressed personage who dashes in and out of his private office and of whom the employees speak with bated breath. However, his general ideas, expressed through his business and his personnel, will be influencing your life and actions hourly. Your immediate boss may be the head of a department or a minor executive or

lesser light who is in charge of a few persons, including you. Anyone over you, from whom you take orders, is your boss. If the system requires that instructions be given you by a number of persons, you can figure you have just that many bosses. Each of them will be a different type of person. This involves your adjusting yourself to their several personalities. With each you must put your best foot forward, as though each were the only one to be considered. If you please this collective boss, you are a success. And of course you will please him; that is what you are training for right now.

The following bit, clipped from a New York newspaper, indicates how large "the boss" looms in the life of the working girl.

#### ASSORTED PHRASES PUZZLE LISTENER

"Wotta punk that guy is." "Some slave driver, I'll say." "Easy going but kinda daffy." "Tightwad." These and other assorted adjectives and phrases tossed about the group of girls around a luncheon table were rather confusing to the listener who did not know the subject matter of this descriptive discussion. Before long, however, the problem was settled. A high-pitched voice raised itself above the babble: "Oh, my boss—he's the most charming dictator in the world. That is, I mean he dictates his letters in the most adorable way."

This suggests a few types of bosses, but there are many more. There is the cranky boss, the untidy boss, the ailing boss, the bossy boss, and the absent-minded boss, to mention a few. It's up to you to study the persons you work under and to classify them in your own mind as well as you can.

You'll have to be a diplomat to adjust yourself to all of them—literally "all things to all men." But if you are the student of human nature I hope you may be, you will be able to figure out how best to get along with each of them.

#### THE WOMAN BOSS

While the woman boss may be any or all of these types, she deserves a paragraph of her own because both young men and women have such strange ideas about working for her. In my

own experience as an employer and as an executive, I have learned that very few men can take orders from a woman. I suppose it is their innate sense of masculine superiority that makes them either insubordinate or bossy when under the direction of a woman. They are sure she must be incompetent and so they try to dominate her and often treat her with insufferable arrogance.

It is quite all right for men to avoid working for women. They can, usually, since women employers are in the minority. But when girls insist they want to work for men only, the matter becomes serious. For them, that is. Dr. Lillian Gilbreth, talking before the Transcription Supervisors' Association of New York City, had this to say:

"One thing which I feel is very fine is the fact that these girls who are coming into centralized departments are working for women and having a happy experience; finding them fair, interested, balanced people for whom to work.

"I made a test of some 400 young girls studying secretarial work not long ago," Dr. Gilbreth went on to say. "One of the things I asked them was whether they would prefer to work for a man or a woman, or were indifferent. About five were indifferent; all the rest wanted to work for a man. There were some very human and commendable reasons, I have no doubt, in a great many of their minds, though I think a good many of them were subconscious and perhaps would have been denied, had I put them. But it seemed to surprise these young women when I said that if they refused to work for women, they were closing doors of opportunity for women like themselves. It seemed never to have occurred to them that if the right kind of trained girls went into business and said they didn't want a woman boss, organizations would have good reason to question the advisability of promoting women into executive positions."

Actually, when girls go into a department "manned" by women, they find it a big help to have an understanding woman fighting their battles for them. But they hate to admit it. An experienced and very able girl I know recently became secretary

to a woman physician in charge of a large sanitarium. My young friend told me how crazy she was about this job—how much responsibility she had, and so on. "You like working for a woman, then?" I ventured to ask. "Oh," she replied quickly, "Dr. Smith is exceptional."

### GIVE THE BOSS A BREAK

In getting along with superiors, and specifically, bosses, there are a few general rules—things often learned by trial and error. Your attitude in relation to interest, enthusiasm, cooperation, and loyalty will help you mightily. A little good old-fashioned deference will add to your score. Keeping your mind on your work and striving to keep up both the required pace and the quality standard are all-important. These things help to keep any boss in a good humor. If he is pleased with the way you handle your work, half the battle is won. But when something out of the routine comes up and you receive special instructions, don't argue about them. Get whatever information you need and get busy. Never mind if you know a better way, or a short cut—or at least think you do. Forget it and do the work the way you are told.

The other night at dinner I sat next to a woman who has a national reputation as director of home economics for a chain grocery store organization. We were talking about the trying experience of dismissing employees.

"When I have to fire an employee I always tell her why," she said, "although it makes her hate me, and I'm not sure it does any good. But I do it because it took me five years to find out why I once lost a good job in which I knew my work was satisfactory. My business life would have been easier if I had known earlier why I was let out."

"Why did you lose your job?" I asked.

"Because I argued. I used to argue when I was told to do a job a certain way, if I thought I knew a better way. Then, if I couldn't argue my superior out of doing it his way, I went at it hammer and tongs to prove him wrong. I was sincere, of course,

in thinking I was right. But not until I became an executive and saw the same attitude reflected in my own department, did I see that I myself had done what annoyed me in my own employees."

This is a good example of the know-it-all attitude I spoke of earlier in this chapter.

### YOU CANNOT ORDER THE BOSS AROUND

And here is another story along the same lines. An experienced legal stenographer in a Government Office pool in Washington was sent by her supervisor to help one of the lawyers get out some special work on a Saturday morning. As the hours slipped by and the lawyer, still busy with his notes, was not yet ready to dictate, she grew restless. Finally she said, "If we are going to get this work out by noon, we'll have to get at it." And then there were fireworks! Fortunately for the stenographer, her supervisor could and did stand between her and instant dismissal. But another young woman was assigned to do that piece of work since the lawyer refused to deal with an employee who presumed to dictate to him. To say that the first stenographer lacked tact is to put it mildly.

### CULTIVATE TACT

Did you notice that little word "tact," which just slipped in? It is a mighty word when it comes to dealing with bosses—Big, straw, or what have you. What will you do, for instance, when you find yourself awaiting instructions from a minor executive who can't delegate work? I say minor, because important executives are where they are because they have made a success of telling a lot of other people what to do. But if you work under one of these fearful persons who thinks nobody can do things as well as he can, you'll have your work of appeasement cut out for you. To allow such a man to do everything for himself means there will be no job for you. So that won't do. You will have to win his confidence and show him you can take responsibility off his shoulders. And the only means of doing that is to

do everything perfectly, exactly as he wishes it. If your patience holds out—and your tact—you can win him over.

### COMPLETE INSTRUCTIONS A SAFEGUARD

At times your boss will be a less meticulous person, with a slapdash method of giving instructions. Then what you need is not so much patience as inspiration. This type of executive is often a brilliant man with fine ideas, but he can't be bothered with the tiresome details of carrying them out. He'll back you to the limit of all you want to do if you show a talent for putting his ideas into smooth operation. Unless the system in the office calls for written instructions, I advise you, when dealing with this broad-gestured executive, always to make notes on what you are told to do. Keep a weather eye out for these gifted men who give only partial instructions. Make them clarify their orders before you set to work. They won't like it, perhaps. They may even put you off with, "Oh, you know what to do." But tactfully stick to your point until you are sure of what they want. Then check your own end of it carefully. Regardless of how effervescent your boss may be, win a reputation for letting no errors get by you, and the job is yours for keeps. You have not only succeeded in getting along with a difficult person but you have supplemented his brainy imagination with your own good common sense—an unbeatable combination.

### STUDY YOUR CHIEF

Let us suppose you are a beginner and that you go to work in a small office where you take orders from "the Chief" himself. You will need to know a great deal about handling a very busy and perhaps badly worried man. For the responsibilities of men who own their own businesses are very taxing. Although your day may be full to bursting, you cannot complain, since his is too. It may even be he is the type of man who thinks you're not doing anything unless you seem hurried and overworked. So you must appear to be busy, yet able to take on all the added duties that may be passed along to you. If you are the only employee, or



perhaps one of two or three, you will probably have to do many personal things for your chief. He will ask you to make his railroad reservations for him, buy his presents for him, telephone messages to his home and club. And if he is a bachelor he may occasionally ask you to purchase shirts and shorts.

As I have already said in Chapter III, these personal duties are usually listed as secretarial. But in a small office the stenographer often has to take them on. Even when a man's wife thinks "the girl in the office" is a secretary for the entire family and asks her to do shopping in her noon hour, there is no use protesting. A part of the business of getting along with the boss is to be agreeable and helpful, even to the extent of accommodating his wife. Just be glad if the man has a good disposition. He could very easily be cranky or petulant and vent his temper upon the office force as well as impose unduly on their time and energy. And even then, jobs being what they are, you have to carry on.

#### HIS MAJESTY IS INFALLIBLE

Sometimes when I am speaking before a group of business girls, one of them will come up to me afterward and say, "You tell us what our shortcomings are in business, but you let the employer go scot-free. Isn't he ever at fault?" Indeed he is, often. But there's nothing we can do about it. Unhappily, the man who pays the salaries can be as disagreeable as he chooses. Because he can hire and fire, you have to take a king-can-do-no-wrong attitude toward him. He can fire you for an outburst of temper but can indulge his own rages at will. You have your choice of putting up with these privileged moods or retiring to private life.

When a difficult boss "bawls you out" before a customer, what then? Whether the fault is yours or not, you are in an embarrassing position. The less you say the better, under such circumstances, I think. Don't be slow in saying, "I'm sorry," and doing what you can to mend the situation, quietly. If there is an explanation due him, make it later when the customer is not present.

Even though you may go to work for a boor, your good business manners can do much to lubricate the employer-employee relationship. And your own poise will help a great deal. A quiet, restrained, courteous manner will often have the effect of calming a highly nervous and irritable person. Such a little thing as saying "Good morning" pleasantly does something to start the day right. There are men who boast they never say "Good morning," but don't take that too seriously. Casually greet them, if it is convenient, but don't annoy them by waiting for a reply. "Thank you" is a courteous response that does wonders in smoothing dispositions. You should not have much occasion to use "please" with your employer, but it does help with fellow workers.

#### BE RESERVED WITH YOUR SUPERIORS

Many times the pleasant relationship between employer and employee is spoiled by the overly personal attitude of one or both. Girls ask me whether they should ever discuss their personal problems and activities with the boss. Others complain they work for "nosey" employers who keep quizzing them about their personal affairs. In either case it seems much better to have one's relationships at the office entirely divorced from one's private life. I am not speaking of "dating" with the boss—that much overworked and overrated movie situation which is seldom met in real life. I'm talking about weeping figuratively on his shoulder and telling him all your most intimate troubles in an effort to better your standing with him. The less your superiors know about your home life and your outside personal affairs, the better for you. In most instances they will not pry into these matters if you do not open the subject. When they do, you can be so noncommittal as to be discouraging.

On those rare occasions when the boss feels for a moment like talking about something other than business, there's always the weather and usually his golf scores. And more often still, he provides the subject himself. Men employees can discuss football, baseball, fishing, and other sports in season, man to man.

They often become good friends with their superiors in an impersonal way that never spills over into their private lives. It seems harder for girls to achieve this detachment, but when they do it is appreciated. "Do you know, that girl has worked for me for two years and I know nothing whatever about her," has been said to me by many employers in open admiration of young women who were reserved about themselves and their home life.

### LAUGH AT YOURSELF WHENEVER YOU CAN

A sense of humor does more to help you understand and adjust yourself to all sorts of people than any other trait. Whether or not it is an asset that can be acquired, if you are without it, is something I cannot tell you. Once I sat at dinner next to a university professor who assured me he was developing a sense of humor in his small daughter. Here was his method: In the professor's household the last one dressed each morning was an "Inkie." At first little Dorothy wept when she was an Inkie and laughed gleefully at Daddy when he was one. But before long Dorothy learned to laugh at herself when the Inkie joke turned against her. Whether or not this system would produce a real sense of humor, the professor had the right idea in assuming that the test of a sense of humor is the ability to laugh when the joke is on oneself.

Office life is sometimes a strain on your sense of humor. Suppose, after you have built up a picture of your future business life centered around a hero-boss, you find yourself working for a man who fails in all your hopeful requisites. Worse still, you are disappointed in your work, too; and even your pay check dwindles in its power to stretch as far as you expected it to. Can you see anything funny in the contrast between your high hopes and the reality? If you can stand that test and go right ahead, undaunted, you may rest assured you have a genuine sense of humor.

### BUSINESS VIRTUES THAT LEAD TO PROMOTION

Early in this chapter I remarked that getting along with others is an art that can be cultivated. I sincerely believe this to

be true. For one thing, each of us can make a real effort to attend to our own business. You have no idea what a difference this one thing will make in your relations with other people until you try it. Making it a rule to let your friends and acquaintances in business broadcast what they wish known about their affairs will discipline you in silence. And remember that habitual reticence is one of the virtues which leads to highly prized confidential positions and to executive rank. Try being thoughtful and considerate of the people for whom and with whom you work. This practice is so rare in business that I assure you it will be noted with appreciation. And what about cutting out the complaining in the interest of more pleasant relationships?

By working on simple everyday problems like these you will soon acquire a reputation for having tact. And you will deserve it. Tactful people are usually well liked, too, I've observed.

### QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for office employees to learn to get along with others?

2. Is it more important to get along well with the executives in your firm than with the office force?

3. Does your attitude count before you go to work? In school? At home?

4. Can the art of getting along with others be learned?

5. Can a student whose attitude in school is uncooperative suddenly change after he goes to work?

6. Name some undesirable attitudes that hamper office workers. Name the opposites of these attitudes.

7. Is "getting by" the same thing as "soldiering on the job"? Is it the same thing as stealing time?

8. What is wrong with beginning to put your work away a half hour before closing time? What attitude does this express?

9. Has a moody person any right to inflict his hurt feelings and his mercurial temperament on his fellow workers?

10. Do you think the "know it all" would be liked by his superiors? His equals? Those below him? How would each of these groups regard the "yesser"?

11. What attitude should a beginner take when his work is criticized?

12. What does teamwork in business mean?

13. Do all employers deserve the loyalty they expect?
14. To what extent are office friendships desirable?
15. Do you think you would mind working for a woman boss?
16. Would you consider that you were making a door mat of yourself if you showed deference to your boss?
17. Why do written instructions facilitate satisfactory employer-employee relations?
18. Is it businesslike for the young employees to call each other by their first names around the office?

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. When you have a job, why isn't it enough that you do good work?
  2. Explain what is meant by the following statements:
    - a. "Her attitude is excellent."
    - b. "I don't like his attitude."
  3. Discuss whether it is ever permissible to say, "That is not my work," or "I was not hired to do that." Would the fact that you are already overworked make a difference?
  4. Discuss whether you could be loyal to an employer whose business practices you have learned are dishonest.
  5. Do you think an employee is foolish to express a willingness to do more work than his job calls for? What about the employee who looks around for something else to do when he has spare time?
  6. When someone of your own rank in business is uncooperative, will you
    - a. Call him down?
    - b. Complain to your chief?
    - c. Accept it, and make the best of a bad situation?
    - d. Speak quietly to your fellow worker, hoping this will remedy the situation?
- If the last answer is your solution, what will you do if the pleasant reprimand only makes him angry?
7. Some employees excuse their loitering on the job by saying, "Well, after all, what is my small salary to a big firm like this?" Discuss the attitude of such employees.
  8. Explain what is meant by an impersonal attitude. Is an objective point of view the same thing?

9. Fred Brewer went to work for the Smith-Jones Manufacturing Company, which employed a large office force. It was a shock to Fred to see how much grumbling there was among the older employees. There seemed to be a feud between them and the newer employees. Fred thought that much of the dissatisfaction had grown out of resentment based upon jealousy because younger men had been promoted over senior employees. At lunch hour in the employees' dining room Fred was forced to listen to disgruntled discussions and bickering. Apparently he was expected to take sides. If you were in a similar situation, would you

- a. Be noncommittal and say as little as possible?
- b. Listen to both factions and try to judge which side is right?
- c. Report the situation to a senior member of the firm whom you know?
- d. Avoid the issue by eating lunch elsewhere?

Can you suggest better ways for spending the lunch hour?

10. Discuss why the majority of young women want to work for men. In earlier chapters you learned that the correspondence work in many large offices is directed by women supervisors. Carried to its logical conclusion, how will the prejudice against women bosses affect the future careers of girls who enter business?

11. Discuss the generally accepted rule in business—*don't argue with superiors or tell them what to do*. Why is this unwritten law necessary to secure smooth-running relationships?

12. Imagine that instead of the hero-boss of your dreams you find yourself working for a bad-tempered man. What will you do if he constantly "bawls you out" both in private and before others, calls you uncomplimentary names, and even swears at you?

13. Suppose you are a stenographer in a small firm where there is no one to plan your work. You take dictation from three executives. Ordinarily, by organizing your time, all goes well. However, when the business suddenly becomes more active, each of your bosses wants his letters got out first. Discuss how you can handle the situation.

14. What will you do if, on your first day on a new job, one of the older employees asks you to lunch? If you refuse, how can you do it so as not to be thought rude or perhaps make an enemy?

**PROJECTS**

1. Teamwork is another term for cooperation. Write a 500-word paper showing why teamwork is as necessary in an office as on the football field.

2. Write a brief paper on loyalty. Explain what is meant by the word as it is used in business and why such a high value is placed upon it by employers.

3. Taking "Office Friendships" as your theme, prepare to give a class talk covering the following points:

a. Congeniality of tastes and interests the basis of true friendship anywhere

b. Office friendships too often based merely on propinquity

c. The inadvisability of having all one's friends among one's office associates

d. The difficulty of maintaining impersonal relationships during business hours when on a too personal basis after hours

4. Suppose that you are ambitious and desire to show what you can do. But you find yourself hampered by working under an executive who cannot delegate work. Write out what steps you would take to win his confidence, convince him that you can be helpful to him, and ease his heavy load.

## CHAPTER XII

### DRESS AND GROOMING ON THE JOB

In an earlier chapter I told you that appearance counts 75 per cent in *getting* a job. Now I am going to add that appearance counts 25 per cent in *keeping* a job.

Once you have landed that precious job for which you are now training, values will shift. Your prospective employer, who in the interview judged you largely by your appearance, will now judge you by your ability, your attitude, and the other things we have been discussing. But make no mistake—the way you look, day in and day out, will count tremendously! That goes for young men quite as much as it does for young women. And let me remark parenthetically that, although this chapter will of necessity deal largely with feminine dress and grooming, the sterner sex need not think it can be skipped. There is much here of masculine interest, too, for the underlying principles of correct dress and grooming apply to men and women alike.

#### APPEARANCE IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR CAREER

Several years ago a leading Eastern secretarial school conducted a survey among approximately 2,000 business executives in Boston and New York to find out what they considered the prime qualifications of a secretary. Appearance was *fifth among* the seven major requirements. Here's the list:

- Native intelligence
- Technical excellence
- Attractive personality
- Good background
- Good personal appearance
- Well-modulated voice
- Good health



Native intelligence we are born with, and background is thrust upon us. The other requirements are within our power to perfect—especially appearance. But first you must know just what business means by “a good appearance.”

### SLUMPING IN APPEARANCE IS BAD BUSINESS

Practically everything we said in Chapter VII on appearance in applying for a job holds true after you have a job. But it seems to need repeating, for, I understand, some young people become careless once they have landed on a pay roll. One night not long ago I sat at dinner next to the employment manager of one of New York's foremost financial institutions. We had been talking about office personnel problems when he suddenly asked, “What can I do with young people who ‘let down’ after they begin to work?” He explained that all too often employees look smart and immaculate when they apply for positions, but start wearing old sweaters, trousers, and skirts as soon as they are sure of their jobs. “I hate to be hard on them,” he went on to say, “but nothing short of reading the riot act seems to do any good.”

I can see little excuse for retrogressing in this way. And it is retrogression! These young men and women understood well enough the importance of making a good appearance for an interview. They should look at their business life as a sort of continuous interview, for they certainly are still and always will be under inspection.

### NOT EVERYONE IS AS LUCKY AS MISS GREEN

In my duologue, “Appearance—Your Greatest Asset,” I have dramatized the feminine embodiment of this careless type. The stage is set as a private office and I play the role of a personnel manager of a manufacturing firm. I receive a telephone call from one of the executives of the company.

**VOICE:** Mrs. MacGibbon, we're going to have to fire Miss Green, I'm afraid.

**MACGIBBON:** What's the matter, Mr. Davis?

**VOICE:** Everything. She comes to work looking like the devil.

MACGIBBON: Oh, surely everything can't be wrong, Mr. Davis. She looked all right when I employed her six months ago. She can't have gone entirely to pieces in that short time. Besides, her work is all right, I know.

VOICE: Well, yes. I have no complaint about her work. But I have to raise the window when she's in my office taking dictation. And last week I took cold, and . . .

MACGIBBON: Oh, I am sorry, Mr. Davis. But don't do anything until I talk with her. I'll send for her right away and see what I can do.

Helen Green is sent for and appears in a none too clean sweater, soiled, low-heeled sports shoes, and a sloppy wool skirt. (At this apparition, the audience usually gasps, or someone giggles self-consciously, and I know Helen Green's type is recognized.)

MACGIBBON: Good morning, Miss Green. Won't you sit down?

GREEN: (*Lifelessly*) Good morning.

MACGIBBON: Miss Green, I'm sorry to have to tell you there's been a complaint from one of our executives about your appearance. One of the men, whose dictation you take, says you look far from neat, and also he questions whether your personal grooming is all that it should be.

GREEN: I'm sorry, —I—

MACGIBBON: So am I, Miss Green. It is always difficult for me to tell anyone these things. But frankly, I am afraid unless we work together and act quickly you may be asked to leave. The situation has become serious for you.

GREEN: But what shall I do? I don't want to lose my job.

MACGIBBON: Of course you don't. It would be a shame. And so unnecessary, because your work is very satisfactory. I wonder if you realize what a nervous strain office work is and how very careful all of us have to be, not only to bathe daily, but to use a deodorant regularly?

GREEN: Probably I have been careless.

MACGIBBON: I'm sure that is all that is wrong, but that can be enough, believe me. Where do you live, Miss Green?

GREEN: A few blocks from here.

MACGIBBON: Haven't you something at home that is more appropriate to wear to work than what you have on?

GREEN: Yes, but I've been saving it.

**MacGIBBON:** What for? I'm sorry to say you may have only been saving it to wear when you go looking for another job. Why not go home and change? Then come back and let me see how you look. And fix your hair and face a bit, too, while you're about it.

When Helen returns to the stage dressed perfectly in a simple dark dress and properly groomed, the audience usually gives her a hand. I don't blame them, for the contrast is striking. Such dealing with a situation by a personnel director might be rather drastic, but I've known it to be done. And I needn't tell you that it works. But, as I explain to Helen Green in our closing lines, not all personnel directors are interested enough in holding a job for an employee to go to all that trouble. More often they'll say nothing, but at the first opportunity will replace the employee with a more personable individual.

#### **YOUR APPEARANCE IS BEING WATCHED**

If a careless appearance and inadequate grooming make it difficult to hold a job, what do you suppose they do when it comes to promotion? Let me tell you a story with a happy ending. Jean Allen was an experienced legal stenographer in a large law firm that chose its secretaries from the stenographic squad. She was exceedingly capable. When the secretary of one of the partners left to be married, Jean was slated to take her place. But the personnel director knew that the partner for whom Jean was to work was extremely fastidious and that Jean was not. However, she had great faith in Jean and was most anxious for her to make good, not only for the sake of the substantial increase in salary, but for the recognition which the promotion meant.

So, difficult though it was, this kindly personnel director called Jean into her office and had a heart-to-heart talk with her. Among other things she said to Jean, "I don't suppose you realize it, but there is a slight odor about your person. It may be that your clothes need cleaning. I can't tell you what causes it, but I advise you to find out before you go on this new job." Furthermore she suggested to Jean that for the better position she should learn to dress the part of a private secretary. She would

need to wear smarter clothes, a more becoming make-up, and a better hair-do. Then Jean was given the afternoon off, and various shops were suggested where she could find suitable clothes, advice on make-up, and an expert hairdresser.

When Jean left her supervisor's office, it began to dawn on her that, in the nicest possible way, she had practically been given orders to revolutionize her habits of grooming and her style of dress. Being really intelligent, she obeyed implicitly, and when she showed up the following morning as Mr. Day's new secretary, none of the executives recognized her. The other employees complimented her so much that Jean didn't know whether to be happier over her changed appearance or her promotion. From then on, things went better and better for Jean. She said she felt like a new person. And her rather reluctant fiancé seemed to think she was one. Soon plans were afoot for her long-deferred marriage and Jean was "promoted" again—this time to a life job.

The rules for correct business dress for both young men and young women have been summed up in Chapter VII. Now we must go into further detail; for it is one thing to get together a single, satisfactory outfit to wear for interviews, but quite another to plan a well-chosen and well-budgeted business wardrobe.

### BUSINESS DRESS IS DIGNIFIED

The first rule you have to conform to is formality in clothes. Gone are the days when the careless comfort of school, college, and sports clothes governed your daytime uniform. And with it went bareheaded freedom. Only if you live and work in a small town can you run over to your office hatless. In cities it just isn't done—not even by young men. You will have to wear a hat to business, and I mean wear it.

For men and women alike, black, navy, brown, and gray are the best colors for business. For men, there is no deviation from this rule. Women may include such quiet tones as maroon, bottle green, and shades of tan; and a bright topcoat is per-

missible with basic black, brown, or gray. However, because formal, inconspicuous colors do not become tiresome, either to those who wear them or to those who look at them, they are the accepted standard for correct business dress. Women employees may add a bit of color in accessories, and young men can relieve the monotony with well-chosen ties. Young men office workers will do well to observe what junior executives wear in shirts, collars; ties, and socks. The chances are that they will see no gaudy, striped shirts or collegiate socks falling down over shoes.

Many people consider the sales force in stores the best dressed group in business. Do you know why they appear so uniformly well dressed? They are governed by store dress regulations (based on what will detract the least from merchandise), which limit them to certain colors. Although some stores have relaxed their regulations considerably in recent years, black and navy are usually the prescribed colors to be worn by women from November to March. During the summer months, most stores allow the girls to wear white, and some stores include pastel shades as well as brown and not too bright green among the permissible. Saleswomen are also encouraged to wear more jewelry than is considered good taste in offices. The reason for such leniency is that stores sell jewelry, and such demonstrations are good for business. Store salesmen are required to wear dark suits and are told in printed rules that coats and trousers that do not match are taboo. This is a valuable tip for young men entering office work.

#### WHEN IN DOUBT CHOOSE BLACK

Several banks have told me they have adopted what amounts to dress regulations and request their women employees to wear black during the winter months. When such a drastic rule is made, it shows that too many women have been guilty of poor taste in their choice of business clothes, with the result that everyone must share in the reprimand. Smart women often choose black as a base, because it is so easy to brighten up with color, and because the same black suit or dress can, with a change of accessories, do double duty for business and "after-hours" dates.

There's magic in a costume that can go to business with a black hat and simple accessories and be transformed by means of a frivolous hat and gay accessories!

### CORRECT SUMMER DRESS

Even though you may think it a hard rule, you will find that the best dressed women, whether in business or in town shopping, prefer dark clothes even in summer. This of course does not mean that light shades and white are not allowable. It is merely an indication that women who dress well realize the advantage of cool, dark clothes as against too wrinkled light things in hot, dusty city life. If, however, you are in a position to wear white and pastel colors *and keep them immaculate*, either by laundering or dry cleaning, do so by all means.

If you choose any of the printed summer rayons that are so cool and practical because they are uncrushable and don't show soil easily, just be sure they do not have that housewife look. You should, of course, also assure yourself they will wash or clean well.

Young men just starting out may find the problem of keeping cool and well dressed more difficult still. It is allowable in all offices to remove one's coat provided the vest is also removed or left at home. But needless to say, the habit of wearing suspenders without a coat is quite as bad as appearing in a vest. A well-tailored shirt, smart tie, and good belt are always considered good grooming in hot weather. But such a practice presupposes, of course, that your shirt is fresh and unwrinkled every day.

### SMOCKS COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS

Some store offices, where there are large groups working together, put women employees in smocks. Ostensibly this is to save their clothes and to bring about uniformity of appearance. Actually it eliminates the wearing of sweaters—either as blouses or for extra warmth—and hides from view uncorseted figures and none-too-fresh and unsuitable clothes. It seems to me that this is a pretty severe indictment of women in business. I sug-

gest that you, who are the coming generation of businesswomen, work to forestall such regulations in the future by never being guilty of the faults smocks so tactfully conceal.

### TOO REVEALING CLOTHES

The matter of wearing sweater-blouses seems to be a major issue just now. Many employers dislike them very much indeed, and with some justification, because sweaters of either slip-on or cardigan type are certainly informal. And coupled with sweaters are socks and "flats." Bare legs are not for business hours unless they are well concealed with good leg make-up, put on fresh every morning. With them should be worn street shoes with a medium heel—never "flats."

Most of the complaint about sweaters is due to the fact that too many women wear them without proper foundation garments or without any at all. Even so, the sweaters or knitted suits should not be too tight, and large girls and women should always avoid them. Even she who cutely wears a size 12 must wear a girdle and a bra if she wears knits—sweater-blouses, dresses, or suits. As a matter of fact, business girls should always wear girdles and bras or all-in-one foundation garments. A friend of mine who is in charge of an office force had to ask a very large and manifestly uncorseted stenographer to buy herself some sort of restraining garment, because her appearance in the office was creating comment. "That's what my family has been telling me," the offender replied. "But I haven't been able to find anything I could be comfortable in, in this hot weather."

"Neither have I," countered the not-so-slim supervisor. "But that is beside the point. Whether or not we are comfortable, we have to wear girdles and bras or their equivalent in the office, winter *and* summer."

### SMART BUT EXPENSIVE

Many young women wear suits to business with great success. Suits are eminently smart and suitable, but, since they require several blouses, they are pretty hard on the budget. Moreover,

the upkeep on suits is high. For when women wear suits to business it is considered correct for them to keep their coats on, just as men do. This is very hard on the sleeves and the shape of the coat. Nor does sitting all day in a suit skirt help its rear view any. So, if you think you prefer a suit as your business stand-by, expect your pressing and cleaning bills to mount.

### THE BEGINNING OF A GOOD APPEARANCE

After having more or less condemned sweaters and been lukewarm about suits, let me tell you what I think is the ideal dress for business. Those of you who have seen my fashion clinics for career girls (presented under department-store sponsorship in many cities) may recall that the first dress shown is always a basic dress. By *basic* dress we mean a dress that is very simple in style but not strictly tailored. It is completely feminine, for it may have tucks or fullness in both the blouse and skirt. If flared skirts are being worn, it will have one. Its sleeves, too, will vary with the current mode. The neckline is always the sort that permits many different changes in collars or jewelry. The basic dress may be any dark, rich color that fits your color scheme, but it is more likely to be black. Its material can be crepe, rayon, or wool, but not velvet or satin when used for business.

### CLEVER DISGUISES

The reason this type of dress is my first love for employed women is because it can "go places" besides the office. From Monday to Saturday, changes of piqué or linen collars in various pastel shades or white, scarves, and simple clips will give your boss the impression you've worn a fresh and different dress every day. Among women it will give you a reputation for knowing clothes. And if you have a date after hours, a frillier, softer collar or "junk" jewelry will be as enlivening as though you had made a complete change. Your basic dress can even star at a party. Silver lamé or gobs of pearls at the neck, a smart turban, white gloves, and a small bag will lift it right up into the Sunday night supper and cocktail party class. Yet your budget will itemize



"one dress." What the accessories cost will depend upon your cleverness as a shopper and with a needle. I have seen some charmingly individual neckwear made from remnants, and some marvelous finds from the jewelry counter at the five- and ten-cent store.

Recently in a Newark store auditorium where I had shown lovely basic dresses with alternate plain and beaded belts and other accessories, a young woman came to speak to me afterward. "I'm starting back to work after being out for several years," she said, "and I have to buy some business clothes. Frankly, I've been dreading going into strictly office dresses again. I am so glad business fashions have changed and I don't have to get things I can't wear other places." This ex-stenographer put her finger right on the reason for the change. Career girls aren't so rich that they can have one wardrobe for work and another for good times. Designers understand this very well, and every season Fashion provides countless around-the-clock models that are both appropriate and inexpensive.

### WARDROBE PLANNING

After you have bought your basic dress and its accessories, it is then quite all right to make your second purchase a tailored dress. There is nothing nicer for steady wear. But realize that such a dress will have a limited use, and consider its value to your dress plan as a whole.

There's that word "plan" again! We seem to have had plenty of use for it in this study. But never more than in relation to dress. For of course, the real secret of being well dressed on a moderate income is to have a plan.

The first requisite of a dress plan is a basic color scheme that you will stick to for several years. In that way you can double in accessories over a long period. Let me give you an example.

### HOW IT WORKS

Judith Hearn decided that brown was a good basic color for her, since she liked it and it was becoming. To relieve any sug-

gestion of "the little brown wren," she could pep it up with green. This was especially practical since Judith already had a green wool dress. She worked out her plan like this:

*For Office Wear*

Three-piece brown wool suit (jacket, skirt, and topcoat with fur collar)

Brown felt hat with tiny green feather in hat band

Brown calf shoes, gloves and bag to match

Green tailored blouse

Brown tailored blouse

*For Dress Wear*

Topcoat (belonging to three-piece suit)

Brown rayon dress

Brown and gold turban

Brown suede pumps, bag and gloves to match

*For In-between Wear*

Brown topcoat (belonging to three-piece suit)

Brown basic dress to be worn with calf or suede accessories and either hat according to the occasion

Gold satin costume blouse to wear with suit brown turban, and suede accessories

Thus Judith had (1) a fall suit, (2) a winter suit by adding the topcoat, (3) a dressier suit by using the gold blouse and suede accessories, (4) a second office outfit based on the green wool dress and brown topcoat, (5) in the brown basic dress, which could also be worn on an "after five" date, a third office dress, and (6) a still dressier costume based on the brown topcoat and the rayon dress. A complete wardrobe, barring sports clothes and evening clothes, from October to April!

**AROUND THE SEASON CLOCK**

When spring came, Judith resisted the lovely, fresh navy blue frocks that were being shown. To have bought even one would have been fatal. For where in her wardrobe plan were the accessories to go with blue? Instead she bought several light-

colored blouses and scarfs to pull her brown suit into the spring picture. A figured crepe frock in a small beige, brown, and green print replaced the rayon dress for "best," under the brown top-coat. To her brown basic dress she added lingerie collars and cuffs. Later, when the weather grew too warm for her fur-collared coat, Judith replaced it with a beige lightweight wool coat. This she chose in a semitailored model that would dress up or down according to whether she wore it over sports clothes, street clothes, or dress clothes. A brown "in-between" straw hat went with either her coat or her suit and with her dresses minus a coat.

Judith got ready for summer with simple tailored dresses in pastel shades that she knew were suitable for office wear. Her choice of colors was aqua, dusty pink, and gold, all of which looked well with her brown accessories and her beige coat. She had her last season's Panama hat reblocked and had several snap-on hatbands made up for it in colors that harmonized with her tailored dresses. She also picked up at a sale white shoes, bag, and hat to wear with her pastel dresses and an aqua cotton lace frock to dance in. Thus her week-end and vacation clothes were provided for.

And when fall came around again, Judith was not in the predicament of many of her friends—she *had* something "fit to wear." Only her green wool dress was worn out, and she replaced it with a brown and gold checked wool. Although her brown basic dress still had lots of wear in it, she decided to alternate it with a dark green basic dress and to add a green hat to wear with it. With such a good start, Judith could wait for the sales before making many major purchases. At that time she planned to go over her wardrobe carefully and build up its weak spots, always keeping in mind that brown was to be her stand-by for a year or two more.

#### SAVINGS BY THE YEAR

You get the idea. Planning, planning all the time! Looking ahead, replacing the worn-outs with something that fits in with

what you have already and freshens up your whole wardrobe. Someone has said that planning a year's wardrobe at a time will save 50 per cent. I don't know whether the saving is that great, but I do know that anyone who adopts a plan and sticks to it can be beautifully and suitably dressed on a very small expenditure. Besides, it's fun. Moreover, this method keeps you out of the sad plight of the girl who buys something special for a date and then has nothing to wear to work. Of what joy a trailing dance frock that wastes its sweetness on the desert air of your clothes closet when you need dresses for work and working dresses that can date too?

### THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

In Judith's plan I gave you no description of her clothes beyond their general type. But, of course, there were no extreme shades in the colors she chose, no bizarrely cut sleeves or skirts, no freakish trimmings, no "amusing" hats, gloves, bags, or shoes. Fads are not for the wardrobe of the budget-minded business girl. You have to develop an instinct for detecting those high fashions which in six weeks will be as dead as last year's dance tunes. You have to cultivate an eye for the more conservatively styled clothes known as "classics" which will go on in good repute for several seasons. It is best, too, to choose clothes of good material that will last and look well as long as you choose to wear them.

Of course, this kind of planning takes quiet thought and fortitude. You can't just dash into a shop and pick something off a rack. First you must work out what you need, then go window shopping or read the fashion magazines for ideas that fit in with your plan, and finally, knowing what you want and how much you can afford to pay, march into a shop with the firm intention of sticking to your guns regardless of the blandishments of salespeople. Remember, not for you the "darling" something you don't need that has "just come in" or is reduced to "practically nothing"! Young businesswomen all over the country are being

cleverly strong minded about their clothes, and their smart appearance at work and at play is proof that it pays.

### PERSUASIVE SELLING A PITFALL TO AVOID

You may get a great deal of wrong advice at times from people who are looking out for their own interests. Not long ago while I was conducting a fashion clinic for business girls in a department store of a Midwestern city, a specialty shop just across the street staged a career girl's fashion show which I attended. The store executive who was handling the microphone began by saying he was going to show mainly separate skirts and shirts because these were "ideal for office wear." The first outfit shown consisted of a bright red flannel shirt and a Kelly green wool skirt. "Fireman's red," said the announcer. "If you can't attract the boss's attention any other way, do it with color." After that he showed gay red and yellow plaids and more bright skirts and sweaters. All of them were charmingly suitable for wear at ski lodges, but not one of them would have done anything for a business girl but got her in wrong with the management and brand her as devoid of good taste in office dress. Did I have fun showing black, brown, blue, and dark green basic dresses that week!

### THE RIGHT PLACE FOR GAITY

In this connection I must say I have been most fortunate in having my department-store sponsors with me 100 per cent in recommending to business girls that they dress appropriately, which can only mean simply and conservatively. If you like bright colors, wear them as accents to your dark clothes during business hours. The best place, however, for a business girl to indulge a love for reds, yellows, Kelly greens, etc., is in housecoats. Perhaps you are wondering why I don't include bright formals with bright housecoats. That will depend upon how much you wear evening dresses. If you have only one or two and wear them often, you will get awfully tired of gaudy gaiety. No, even for gala nights on the business girl's calendar, black, white, and pastel shades wear best.

## SPARTAN MEASURES

But suppose things go against you, and for a time you can't spend money for a planned wardrobe. Illness in the family or heavy dental bills of your own sometimes knock your budget galley west. Yet, to hold the job, you must look well. I'll tell you what one courageous and smart young businesswoman I know did in such an emergency. She went to the basement of a good department store and tried on dresses that went with her current coat. Then she bought, for less than ten dollars, the simplest and most becoming of the lot. She selected a frock that she knew she could transform into what would look like a \$20 or \$25 dress. Fortunately, she knew enough about sewing and remodeling to understand how much she could sensibly undertake in that direction.

When she got the dress home, she went to work and ripped off all the superfluous bows and gimcracks. In addition she ripped apart seams that were puckered and ran them up again on the machine. The dress needed refitting and she got a friend to pin it up on her. The cheap stitching that showed she took out and replaced with new, fine stitching. The hem she put in by hand. When the remodeling was done, my friend added a new belt and a clip. It takes taste and imagination to do this sort of thing well, but the results can be miraculous.

And even more Spartan than this experience is that of a stenographer I heard of who had been out of work for some time and had nothing to wear for job hunting. The only good garments remaining in her debilitated wardrobe were a wine-colored blouse and a pair of white shoes. Winter was soon coming; so whatever she got had to be warm. With expert advice from one of the big stores and \$12 in cash, her problem was worked out like this: A wine-colored suit was found, costing less than \$10. Two dollars were spent for a hat and bag and the white shoes were dyed to match the suit. The result was in good taste—and she got a job. But may you never face a like situation! It is to be hoped, rather, that you will be among the fortunate major-

ity and can plan your wardrobe on a systematized expenditure, which you can determine for yourself after studying the clothes budgets given in detail in Chapter XIV.

#### A PRICE RANGE FOR EVERY POCKETBOOK

When I show appropriate and really lovely business clothes in my department-store fashion shows, someone is almost sure to come up to me afterward and say, "I don't see how you can expect working girls to buy clothes like these." It goes without saying that anyone on a beginner's salary should not buy the same priced clothes that a woman executive could afford. I always show things that fit the pocketbooks of both these extremes, as well as outfits for the great majority whose salaries lie somewhere in between. Apart from the department stores, I have observed that scattered throughout the best shopping districts in many cities are stores that specialize in low-priced dresses appropriate for office wear. The beginner who knows style and has a clothes plan can often find a suitable "little number" within her price range in one of these shops. Sometimes, in cities that permit it, these small shops are open in the evening, for her convenience.

There are many other ways of saving money besides "socking it away." One of them is watching the newspapers for sales. I don't mean "special sales," which are usually "special purchases" of cheap merchandise. I mean the legitimate, seasonal sales of the better stores. Some of the better department stores have "end-of-the-month sales," when they clear out and start fresh with the new month. When you can hit upon such sales, you will often strike a bonanza, for the merchandise offered has been in the store only a few weeks and is still very fresh and attractive. Shopping like this is fun! Most high-grade department stores and specialty shops also have semiannual sales, when they reduce all style merchandise of the previous season. These sales often come as early as a couple of months after the opening and in ample time for most of us to get new clothes for that season. If you know just what you want or what will fit in with

your planned wardrobe, these are your opportunities for "finds." One of the best helps you can have in working out a suitable and budget-wise wardrobe is *Seventeen*. This very smart magazine is written strictly from your point of view. Its articles, stories, and advertisements are all planned to give you a start in the world. Read it every month.

### LEARN TO HANDLE EXPENDITURES WISELY

Some young men and women can regiment themselves so that they put aside money for clothes they plan to buy months hence. Others find a charge account at a good store a better method, as this enables them to pick up things at sales or to buy a costume, complete with accessories, at one time and pay for it all, over two or three months. There is a special arrangement in many stores for young business people, called "a budget account." Both of these plans are all right. The thing to do is to experiment until you find which works better for you. If charge accounts are too great a temptation to spend, you will do better to follow the sterling rule of paying cash.

I hope the young men are still with us in studying this chapter. For, as I said in the beginning, the same problems and the need to solve them exist for them. If you have a place to store it through the summer, you can often buy an excellent overcoat in April for \$15 less than you will be able to, the following fall. Should you work in a hot climate, by all means get an unlined, dark wool gabardine, or a dark Palm Beach suit, for summer wear. Buy as good a one as you can afford and make it last several summers. It will, if you take care of it. In this way you will not only be more comfortable, but you will save your other suits. Clothes that you perspire in during the hot months are that much less fit for wear in the fall.

### STOCKINGS VERSUS LEG MAKE-UP

Silk, nylon, and rayon are your three stocking choices. You will find good-quality nylons the most economical because they far outwear either silk or rayon. Care in handling and washing



as soon as possible after you take them off to get rid of perspiration stains prolong the life of all stockings. Also they will wear longer if washed while new, before being worn. Of course, I assume that you change your stockings every day. Fresh stockings and fresh underthings are the first rule of good grooming.

If your favorite way of cutting your stocking bill is to wear no stockings at all, you'll find when you go to business that, while bare legs are sometimes acceptable, it is assumed that bare legs mean legs well covered with a good leg make-up; and whether leg make-up by the bottle is less expensive than stockings is something you'll have to work out for yourself. I doubt that it will prove a saving, if you use leg make-up properly and put it on every day.

While many employers have no fault to find with this innovation (in fact, when such make-up is well put on, they are often unaware of it), they definitely object to streaky leg make-up. A further objection is that, without stockings to which you can fasten garters, a girdle is not only uncomfortable but does not fulfill its function.

#### CLASSIC SHOES WEAR LONGEST AND LOOK BEST

Shoes for business girls deserve special mention because here most girls seem to go astray. Spike-heeled pumps are their preference, apparently, regardless of whether or not these shoes are appropriate with suits and simple office dresses. Actually high-heeled opera pumps are as poor taste with a suit as a pair of sports Oxfords would be with an evening gown. Men show much better taste in shoes than women. No man wears his patent-leather dress shoes with tweeds, nor does he wear sports shoes with business suits. Tan or black Oxfords, depending upon the color of his suit, are his choice for business wear.

The feminine counterpart of a man's Oxfords are Oxfords with a Cuban or Continental heel or a tailored pump with a moderate heel. Need I add that toeless, backless sandals are not correct during business hours? During the war we learned to buy shoes more wisely because of the scarcity of precious shoe stamps. So

keep to your wartime training and buy street shoes that will go with more than one costume—basic black and brown in classic styles, which are neither strictly sports wear nor for dress.

One way to cut the cost of shoes is to take meticulous care of them. Heels should be straightened the moment they begin to run over. This will help your shoes to keep their shape and last longer. Moreover, run-over heels are a crime against good grooming. Putting your shoes on trees the moment you take them off does wonders in keeping their good looks and prolonging their life. Suede shoes require constant brushing, and calf shoes must be polished often, to look right. And shoelaces should never be allowed to get soiled, frayed, or shabby before they are replaced.

#### CARE MAKES CLOTHES LAST

The care of clothing is even more important than the care of shoes and stockings. Entire books have been written on this subject. Suffice it to say here that dry cleaning is both necessary and cheap and that it must occupy an important place in the budget of every business person. Offices are dirty places, but that is no excuse for wearing soiled clothing to work. Some spots can be easily removed at home, but usually it is safer and cheaper to let the cleaner handle them. It's no economy to ruin a dress or suit to save a cleaner's bill. Everything washable must be washed constantly. Young men have to allow more for laundry in the summer because of increased perspiration. I hope the day will come when men will be allowed to be more comfortable in hot weather. But wherever good form requires them to keep on their coats, keep them on they must! Women employees should not undertake to wear white collars and cuffs and white gloves unless they are willing to pay the price. White accessories must be washed every time they are worn.

Frequent pressing of both men's and women's clothes is necessary to good grooming. This you can learn to do yourself. But be warned: never buy a linen dress or suit unless you are willing to press it after every wearing. Some dresses can be semipressed

by hanging them in the bathroom with the hot water running. But this is only an emergency measure. It is a good plan to put clothes on hangers the minute you take them off. Repeatedly letting them lie on a chair for even a short time will eventually ruin their shape. When you take clothes off is a good time to let them air (on hangers) before you put them in your closet. The airing will take out some of the wrinkles. Before you put your clothes away, brush them well. A clothes brush in the office, too, is a great help.

These are little niceties of grooming which young people are inclined to overlook. But when you go to work, the meticulous care of your person and your clothes is a "must" that you will have to observe if you are to stack up in the keen competition you will meet.

#### GROOMING DO'S AND DON'T'S

And then there are the "don't's" of good grooming—refinements that are important if we are not to offend others. One of these is the use of perfume. Usually the devotee of the perfume flask either has the habit or thinks it adds allure. You check allure outside when you enter office life! Perfume is positively antipathetic to many people, with executives foremost in the group. That drop of perfume on the lobe of your left ear may intrigue "the boy friend," but it is likely to revolt the man whose dictation you take.

Nail polish—that is, bright, dark, or conspicuous in any way is another "don't" during business hours. Since practically all men despise red nails, it is a mistake in grooming to wear them to work. The lighter shades, on the contrary, are evidence of careful care of your nails. So reserve the brilliant shades to dramatize your night life, and be sure to get up early enough in the morning to change your polish before you set out for the office. Of course, when you use polish at any time it must be perfect. Chipped and peeling polish is as unforgivable as dirty fingernails.

It should not be necessary even to mention painted toenails; but alas, too many business girls disregard the rule about open-

toed shoes and go further still, exposing blood-red toenails. Painted toenails may enhance a beach costume, but on the job they are extremely revolting to most bosses.

Don't neglect the careful grooming of your hair. First care—good brushing and frequent shampoos—for men and women alike, and then for women the right hair-do. And women should learn to use a "rear-view" mirror. It is astonishing how many of them dress their hair in front and not in back! Choose a simple hairdress that is easy to keep in order, becoming to you, and appropriate to business. During business hours forego girlish flowers, clips, and bows in your hair—they are as out of place as a trailing evening gown.

The "do's" of make-up, I think, are more important than the "don't's." For while good taste forbids the use of too much make-up, good sense suggests that the right make-up is important. You should look as natural and as healthy as possible. If you will turn back to Chapter VII, you will find there suggestions for make-up which are just as valuable on the job as in getting the job.

So dress as well as you can afford and see to it that you are well put together. Then forget yourself and your clothes. Nervous mannerisms can spoil all your effort, if you let them. The hair-patters and shoulder-strap-twitchers show a pathetic lack of the poise that business considers desirable.

Now you are making good on your job, and you know something about the importance of making a well-groomed and well-dressed appearance. We shall suppose your employers are watching you with approval. They think you have what it takes for promotion, and certainly promotion is highly desirable! What can you do to speed up that step up?

### QUESTIONS

1. After you go to work, has appearance the same importance as when you were looking for a job?
2. What other qualities now come to the fore?

3. Can you afford to become slack in your dress and grooming, just because you have a job?

4. Do you think excellent work can offset careless dress and uncleanness?

5. Can you wear the same clothes to work that you wore when job hunting?

6. Now that you have a job, would it be allowable to wear to work the sports clothes you wore in school or college?

7. Are rolled stockings considered good form for business girls?

8. Name the colors generally approved for business wear, for men and women alike. How can business people use color to liven up their office clothes? Must dark colors be worn in summer, or are light colors and white permissible?

9. Is it a better plan for beginning workers to

a. Buy high fashions that are good only for the present season?

b. Buy conservative styles that can be worn indefinitely?

10. Why is taking care of your clothes an important part of being well dressed? Name some of the simple things you now do to keep your clothes in good condition. Name some that you have not done but that you intend to begin to do as part of your preparation for business life.

11. Is it allowable to wear perfume to business?

12. Do employers approve of red toenails?

13. Is it considered good form to wear elaborate costume jewelry, including earrings, to work?

14. Should a stout woman wear sweaters or knitted dresses to business?

15. Under what circumstances is it permissible for women to remove suit jackets in the office? For men to remove their coats?

16. Is it in good taste for women to wear thin batiste or chiffon blouses when they expect to remove their jackets?

17. What is the one unbreakable rule regarding women's white accessories and men's linen?

18. Is it allowable for women to apply make-up at their desks, in view of the office force?

**WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?**

1. If you are not good looking there is nothing you can do to achieve a good appearance.
2. All employees slump in appearance as soon as they get jobs.
3. Office managers are not particular about the appearance of those who work under them.
4. Colors suitable for business wear are red, purple, yellow, and Kelly green.
5. The best dressed women in stores, banks, and other places of business never wear black.
6. Employers are uniformly opposed to women wearing sweaters.
7. A basic dress is a dressy afternoon frock.
8. If a salesperson tells you a dress or suit is becoming, you should buy it.
9. Planning your wardrobe for a year will not save you money, but it will save time.
10. Fireman's red worn by a stenographer is sure to impress an employer favorably.
11. Those on small beginning salaries are not expected to dress appropriately.
12. A young man who buys an overcoat in the summer must be crazy.
13. Girls save money by buying one pair of stockings at a time.
14. Well-dressed businessmen wear patent-leather dress shoes to the office.
15. Young women may correctly wear spike-heeled pumps with business clothes.
16. Open-toed, backless slippers are suitable for office wear.
17. Airing and brushing clothes is an old-maidish habit.
18. Since her dates are more important than her job, a business girl should put more money into evening clothes than into office clothes.
19. Having the good taste to dress correctly in the office seldom helps win promotion.

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Give the reasons why employers wish to be surrounded by well-dressed, immaculately groomed employees.

2. Discuss how posture helps a man or a woman make a good appearance.

3. Discuss the prospects of the young man or woman who dresses suitably to get a job, but becomes careless after going to work.

4. What is the advantage to you of buying clothing according to a plan, as against buying whatever you see that you like?

5. How many office outfits do you think you will need when you first go to work? Why do you need more than one, if you do? What is the advantage of keeping everything in one color scheme?

6. Explain what a basic dress is and why it is recommended as the first purchase a stenographer or typist should make after she gets a job.

7. Executives expect young women in the lowest salary brackets to be as appropriately dressed and as well groomed as the women in higher salaried positions. Should a beginner, on a small salary

a. Go in debt to buy clothes?

b. Disregard the management's wishes?

c. Buy appropriate dresses at prices she can afford?

8. Discuss what is wrong with each of the following and state what would be correct in each case.

a. Mavis Doane chose black as the basis for her business wardrobe because she went out a great deal and her black things would go anywhere. One of her favorite "around-the-clock" outfits was a black crepe afternoon frock, cut rather low in front. During office hours, Mavis tried to hide her too exposed neck with heavy gold or silver necklaces. These called for matching earrings and bracelets, with the result that Mavis glittered in the cold light of day like a Christmas tree. She argued that the jewelry was allowable because her simple black dress toned it down.

b. For summer office wear, Peggy Farmer chose the thinnest things she could find. Most of them were chiffons and nets, some of them dark in color. For slips under her filmy clothes, Peggy wore anything that happened to be convenient. They were usually pink or white or otherwise unrelated to the color of the dress that covered them.

c. A thin summer suit for hot days was beyond John Bedford's budget. Consequently he suffered in his heavy winter suit, often arriving at the office in a dripping perspiration. It didn't help matters much that the summer custom in the office was to take off coats, since John's shirt was already soaking wet.

d. James French, on the other hand, wore a summer suit with a lightweight vest. This last garment he kept on, wearing it completely unbuttoned. And for greater comfort still, Jim rolled his sleeves up.

### PROJECTS

**1. For Men Students.** In Chapter XIV you will find a clothes budget based on an annual expenditure of \$225. Turn to it and study it. Assume that you have had eight months' wear out of the clothes listed there, plus the suit, overcoat, and haberdashery mentioned in the introductory paragraph. Plan replacements over a three months' period, beginning in December. Do not spend over \$40.

**2. For Women Students.** Plan an expenditure over a three months' period which will complete and correct a basic wardrobe which now contains:

- 1 shabby blue topcoat
- 1 good gray crepe basic dress
- 1 pair good brown shoes (classic pumps)
- 1 blue hat (felt)
- 1 good green wool dress
- 1 pair blue gloves
- 1 blue bag

Do not spend over \$40. Assume it is December and plan to buy certain things at January sales. Explain your reasons for each purchase planned.

**3. All Students.** Starting with the job-getting outfit you assembled as a work exercise in Chapter VII, build it up into a suitable wardrobe for wear on a beginning job. Make a list of what you will need to complete such a wardrobe.

**4. Women Students.** Assume you have bought a black basic dress and wish to add accessories to it that will afford changes for office wear three times a week. List your selection of accessories. Also list accessories you would use with the dress to make it suitable for wear to

- a. A Sunday-night supper
- b. Church

**5. All Students.** Taking navy blue as the basis of your color scheme and assuming that you already have a navy suit (or dress), work out the



additions you would make over a period of two years. Include accessories and mention their colors, always keeping in mind they should harmonize with navy blue. In this exercise, you need not keep track of the cost of your purchases, since this is a study in taste and judgment, rather than in the handling of money. However, do not make additions to your wardrobe beyond what you could afford if you were earning \$25 a week.

## **CHAPTER XIII**

### **STEPPING UP TO A BETTER JOB**

Often making good on a job and stepping up to a better one turn out to be one and the same thing. You may work along for months or even years, doing your best work each day but feeling like little more than a busy droning bee. And then suddenly new horizons open. You find yourself singled out to fill a vacancy, or perhaps even a new job is created for you. It is all very breath-taking and exciting. You have been doing better work than you knew! Those over you have been aware of it and now they reward you. You have outgrown your old job and are now ready for the next step, though perhaps you have been too close to the picture to see what has been happening to you. Let me illustrate with a story told me by the head of a Midwestern training school for secretaries.

#### **PROMOTION WITHOUT THE TAG**

Helen Quinn had been working for about three years and was pretty discouraged. She felt she wasn't getting anywhere. Her disappointment was the more keen because one of her friends had made outstanding progress in another firm. So one evening Helen called on her school principal and discussed the situation with her. Together they analyzed the two companies for which Helen and her friend worked. It appeared that Helen was working for the more conservative of the two, and apparently their policy was to move slowly in the matter of promotions. Obviously Helen was making good, for she had received several small increases in salary. Her teacher was at a loss to tell her how to improve her situation beyond patiently plugging on. However, just as Helen was leaving she mentioned her assistant.

"You have an assistant?" the principal asked.

"Oh yes, they gave me a girl to break in on some of the routine work. That was about three months ago," Helen replied.

"And you're worrying about whether there is a future there for you? You may not have been given a new title or a sizable raise in salary, but when an employer gives you an assistant to free you from routine work, you can be certain there are definite promotional plans afoot for you. Congratulations! You're already on your way up."

### STUDY THE FAILURES

You will recall that, in our chapter *Making Good on the Job*, a study entitled *Why They Couldn't Hold Their Jobs* was reproduced. Please turn to it again. Let us consider especially the column headed "Deficiencies Preventing Promotion."

You will notice that, whereas the lack of specific skills was responsible for only 10.1 per cent of the dismissals, it accounts for 23.5 per cent of the failures to advance. Either these employees soon reached the limit of their limited skills, or they failed to improve themselves by outside study in order to be able to take on more difficult work. It is interesting to see that deficiency in English tops the list of failures in skills. The percentage is 5.2—two full points more than shorthand failures. Deficiency in arithmetic accounts for 3 per cent of the failures to advance, with inability to spell following closely and ahead of inadequacy in typing. This bears out what you were told in Chapter IV regarding what business wants in skills and abilities.

### LACK OF CHARACTER TRAITS TAKES HEAVY TOLL

Now let us see how character traits ranked in preventing promotion. Take a good look at each trait and its damaging effect as shown in both columns of figures. Lack of initiative heads the list of character deficiencies that block promotion, with lack of ambition a close second. (We shall discuss the positive side of these two important qualities later in this chapter.) Then in third place we find that old bugaboo, carelessness. You will see

that this deficiency, which lost their jobs for 14.1 per cent of those office workers who were let out, prevented promotion in only half as many instances. This may be because most careless employees are eliminated long before promotion becomes a possibility.

Noncooperation and laziness also are very evident in the ranks of those who are making no progress, whereas undue attention to outside interests and tardiness continue to take their toll. However, none of these four liabilities appears to affect promotion to the same extent it brought about actual loss of jobs. Once more we must believe that the weeding out began in the early days of employment, before the individuals involved could even call their jobs permanent, let alone steps up.

I have a specific reason for calling your attention to the obstructing traits listed in this survey. I want you to realize that large corporations such as General Electric and the Equitable Life Assurance Society, two of the firms which cooperated in making this survey, pay particular attention to such characteristics. Here are cold figures that corroborate many statements throughout this book for which I have asked you to take my word. This impartial survey among leading employers plainly indicates that, although skills are your first essential, you must watch your step if you want to step up. Fortunately, in the main, character traits are within your control, and it rests with you whether they count for you or against you.

### ONE STEP UP—BECOME INDISPENSABLE

Let us turn now to the positive qualities that will help you win promotion. It goes without saying that, if you are going to stay with a firm and work up in it, you must make yourself indispensable as soon as possible. Obviously, one way to accomplish this is to become someone's right hand—a Man Friday who relieves an overworked executive of burdensome detail. In a small business where you have an opportunity to show what you can do right from the start, you sometimes become indispensable very quickly. This is why many young people with marked

executive ability are happiest in a small business where they are given a variety and multiplicity of duties.

**High-quality Work.** In large organizations you get no such chance to become an extra pair of eyes, hands, and feet for someone who needs to delegate all the odd jobs he can. So you must find another way to make yourself indispensable. Perhaps you can produce such a high quality of work that it will be noticed by others. I recall the case of a young woman in an advertising agency where I worked who set out to make the copy she typed look exceptionally attractive. She succeeded so well that soon all the copy writers were asking that she type their copy because her work gave them and the agency's clients a better idea of how the advertisements would look in type. Absolute accuracy in your work, day in and day out, makes you indispensable to executives who value this quality highly.

**The Quantity Producers.** Other people make themselves invaluable because of the quantity of work they can turn out—with quality not overlooked, of course. This is especially true of shipping clerks, order clerks, and others in whose work time is an important factor. It may well be true of filing clerks also, since in their job countless papers must be handled daily if the files are to be instantly useful and up to the minute.

You may think it hopeless, especially in many of the beginning routine jobs of business, to establish a reputation for doing something better than anyone else in your office. But it is not. You'd be surprised how often an executive says: "I simply couldn't get along without John. Why he can . . ." and he launches forth upon a paean of praise for an employee who can turn out some routine job in record time and perfect shape with a minimum of instruction.

**Saving Executives' Time.** Some young people become well-nigh indispensable because they think of ways to save executives' time. A man in a high position in an automobile parts manufacturing company told me he had such a secretary. Without any prompting she instituted a method of sorting his mail into three sections. It was as simple as a, b, c—only she called it "1, 2, 3." Like this:

1. You don't need to bother. I have taken care of these.
2. You should know about, but the office manager can take care of them.
3. You should take care of these.

Looks simple enough, doesn't it? But no other secretary had ever devised such a timesaver for him. Because there was fundamentally sound organization in this little plan, it literally saved the executive hours of time formerly spent in unnecessary reading of mail and freed him for constructive work. No wonder he swore by his "perfect secretary"!

**Time and Temper Lost.** The same businessman told me of an instance in marked contrast to this. A dealer had written in to say he must have such and such a part immediately. "The people are touring, are tied up here, and are charging their hotel bills to us. For Pete's sake, rush it!" the harassed dealer ended his letter. The executive, greatly rushed himself, said to a stenographer who was pinch-hitting for his secretary: "Here, have this part sent out at once and send him a letter airmail that it's coming. You can sign it. I won't be back in time." To his horror the next day he found this carbon on his desk: "We are very sorry to hear of your troubles. No doubt you will hear from us shortly." The fur flew. The telegraph wires hummed. And the stenographer lost her job.

**Business Housekeepers.** The business world is well sprinkled with indispensable secretaries who have become such because they had first proved their ability to handle detail unerringly in lesser positions. Men do not, as a sex, like to be bothered with detail and are glad to entrust it to others as fast as this can safely be done. It was feminine capacity for looking after the house-keeping end of business that brought women into offices, and the same good trait has made this work almost exclusively theirs.

Sometimes a secretary extends her capacity for handling infinite detail until it includes looking after her boss's well-being. When I was a guest at a tea given by the Stenographers' Club in St. Louis not long ago, I talked with two young women who were secretaries to a lumberman and a brewer, respectively. In recounting the things they found to do to make themselves

especially useful to their employers—the little things that were most appreciated—one said, “When my chief comes in looking as if he had had a late night, I put a row of aspirin tablets on a tray beside his thermos of fresh water, which I also always provide.” The second said: “Ditto. Only it’s a different remedy I leave handy.” Another “bit of business” which one of these secretaries found useful was to keep an eye on where her boss put things. “He buzzes for me to find everything in his desk,” she explained. “It makes a hit if I can find things more quickly than he can.”

**Two Women Made Success Possible.** A traveled friend told me the following rather pathetic story. It illustrates the extremes of dependence in which a brilliant man may indulge himself.

An English peer was managing director of one of the largest steel companies in Europe. His personal interests, too, were extensive. His wife ran his immense house with a staff of twelve or fifteen servants and ran it so smoothly that he had no worries at all, no matter how large, lavish, or important his entertaining became. At the steel works his secretary functioned with equal efficiency. When the managing director arrived in the morning he found on his desk a typewritten schedule of his work for the day. Also, his secretary had prepared a list of his definite appointments giving precedence, customary in England, according to the positions and ranks of the men with whom he had appointments. A second list included tentative appointments subject to his approval. This top-flight executive almost never wrote a personal check and never knew how much money he had in the bank. His secretary took complete charge of his personal bank account and every few months reported its state to a penny.

For twenty-five years this well-cushioned arrangement continued. Suddenly, and within a week, both the wife and the secretary died. The poor man was utterly bereft. He had not only lost the two most important women in his life, but he had lost the comfort and security they had bestowed and of which he had scarcely been aware. He woke up to the fact, for the first time,

that these two faithful women were large factors in his success. He took a smaller house; but the servant problem was beyond him, and he was unable to find a housekeeper to his satisfaction. In his office he tried out one secretary after another. But neither he nor they could organize his work. After twenty-five years of dependence he had lost the power to handle detail or to train someone to handle it for him. Within a year and a half, defeated, this helpless, brilliant man resigned his managerial position and went to live at his club.

#### **ANOTHER STEP UP—ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY**

Most secretaries reach that goal because they have been able to take responsibility in lower positions. Many head bookkeepers grow out of accurate assistant bookkeepers, often stepping up still further to the job of auditor or comptroller. Business is ever on the lookout for young men who can be trained for important executive positions. In the clerical end of business, also, there is advancement for those who are able to see more than mere routine in the tasks before them. The fact of such promotions is a matter of daily record. What we are concerned with is the "how" of this ladder-climbing act. Would that I could give you a definite rule!

Different people get on in different ways and at different levels. The very differences that exist between individuals, as well as between opportunities, are factors in advancement. But all advancement has one thing as a prerequisite, and that is successful performance in a previous job. As in the army, promotion from the ranks of business is apt to be won on merit. That is why, in our chapter on Making Good in Business, I stressed the importance of forgetting promotion at the start and concentrating on showing what you can do in the job you have.

**Too Early Efforts Unwise.** Even the beginner must be able to take some responsibility. Just seeing each task through to a successful conclusion is a test of your ability to shoulder responsibility. But beware of assuming responsibility before you are ready for it or have the necessary background of experience.



Responsibility implies the making of decisions, and executives do not care to have subordinates deciding things that are out of their province.

I am reminded of a recent case of too much assurance which came to my attention only the other day. In a manufacturing firm on the Pacific Coast, a capable young woman had been working for several months on a temporary basis in the production department. Her duties were confined to detail. For a long time the production manager had been hoping that this skillful assistant would be put on a permanent basis and had so recommended. During his absence the recommendation went through. But alas! It was the signal for the assistant to start various innovations of her own which were only half thought out. The other executives with whom she came in contact suffered in silence and avoided her as much as possible, waiting for the return of her immediate chief. Just as soon as it can be done without detriment to the work, she will find herself looking for another job. And, of course, it will be impossible to call her for any future temporary work in that office.

**Wisdom Urges Caution.** Perhaps you are wondering how you can ever learn to take responsibility if you don't make a try at it. Suppose that, with one or two minor positions to your credit, you are breaking in on a new job. One day in the absence of your superior you answer the telephone. The man on the wire says, "This is Ben Green, of the Anchor Roofing Company. Regarding that order of wallboard you just delivered. We find we need only half of it. Send your truck over and take the rest back."

What will you do? Try to handle it as your chief would, or merely be as efficient as possible without committing yourself? The latter course by all means. To say, "We'll send for it," or "That's a noncancellable order," would be to exceed your authority, even if you know what the firm's policy is in such situations. Not until you have been directly instructed to handle such emergencies should you take the initiative. How then are you going to show your ability to take responsibility? By using

tact and judgment. Instead of merely saying: "Mr. Davis is out. Please call him later," you might say something like this: "I'm sorry, Mr. Green, but Mr. Davis is out. I'll give him your message and he'll call you as soon as he comes back. No one else has the authority to have the trucks pick up merchandise that has been delivered on order."

By such a reply you have built up the importance of your chief, and you have made it clear to Mr. Green that perhaps he can't return that wallboard. If he can, he will be doubly pleased, and grateful to Mr. Davis. Getting the facts and passing them on promptly and correctly is your job and a good lesson in responsibility. Making decisions will come later.

**Carelessness Again.** Carelessness and responsibility taking never dovetail. One beginner I know had this unhappy experience: An executive dictated a telegram and said, "Send it night letter." When Gladys typed the telegram she marked it correctly against the NL at the top of the telegraph form. But the executive changed the wording, necessitating the retyping of the message. This time Gladys neglected to check it "night letter," and the telegraph company assumed it should go as a straight message. Naturally, when the item showed up on the Western Union bill at \$27.65, there were "ructions" in the office.

**Some Won't Take Responsibility.** Some people eat up responsibility, and others shun it. You have seen this happen in school. There are boys and girls who can always be counted on to run the class, to put on shows, and to organize other activities. You may say that John and Marie are born leaders or that they have marked executive ability. Both are probably true. John and Marie, and their like, stand out because the majority of the school are just as well pleased to be followers. The same thing is seen in business, and perhaps it is a good thing that this is so. It leaves the field clear for the ambitious and the capable. But remember that leaders must have something to lead. There would never be an army or a theatrical production—to mention obvious examples—if there were no soldiers for officers to lead or cast to support the star. And there would be no business to

transact if there were no subordinates to grease the wheels of routine and keep the work rolling, in the filling of orders.

A young woman I know, who operates a training school for a business-machine manufacturer in New York, tells me she finds very few, out of the 1,700 employees she instructs and places each year, who want to take responsibility. Her job is to give specific training in the operation of her company's machines to the employees of firms that are installing these machines and to a few young businesswomen. Although she accepts only a small percentage of the latter who apply for training, she says even this carefully chosen group are for the most part responsibility dodgers. Too often, when my friend has a chance to place an operator in a better position with more salary, the girl declines. She is perfectly satisfied where she is. To take on responsibility often means staying after five. And what is more money compared to a definite quitting time?

#### LISTEN FOR OPPORTUNITY'S HONK

But this book is written for ambitious young people. So let's look at some of the guises in which opportunity may come to you in business. Someone has said that Opportunity no longer comes to the door and knocks. It merely drives up to the curb and honks. So you must be listening, or even half out the window watching, all ready to pile in and slam the door.

**Supervising Jobs Ahead.** Often Opportunity sneaks up without so much as a honk. One day you are asked rather casually to supervise the work of someone else. Some of the best positions in the field of office work lie in supervising, and they are practically without exception filled from the ranks. So, if you are, without warning, requested to stay for a few minutes after work to instruct a new employee on operating a switchboard, or filing, or some other phase of clerical work with which you are familiar, take the assignment without a murmur. Believe me, you can afford to forget your date with the hairdresser or the handball game at the "Y." This lucky break is more apt to occur in a

small office, for in a large office the work is likely to be centralized, and a supervisor takes care of such things. But in a small office you can begin to prepare for supervising work there, when the business grows; or elsewhere in a larger office later on.

After a talk I gave to business girls in a Southern city, Ruth Hill came up to speak with me. Ruth explained that she worked in the offices of a Government bureau and said she had recently been asked to supervise the work of fourteen typists and stenographers. "I am not at all interested in that kind of work," Ruth told me. "Shall I ask them to report to me every morning what they did the day before?" she queried.

Apparently the executive in charge of the office had given Ruth no instructions, but had naïvely assumed she would know what to do. Nor had he explained to her that this was decidedly a step up for her. Ruth had never heard of a stenographic "pool," and, since the central stenographic bureau by any name had not penetrated her city, she was entirely at a loss to know what had happened to her and what to do with her new responsibilities. I did my best to show her that Opportunity had not only honked but had picked her up and started off with her. Although I have not heard the outcome, I hope Ruth had the executive ability her chief credited her with having and that she profited from the literature I sent her telling how such departments are organized and operated.

Sometimes the supervising jobs are in the bookkeeping department. Suppose you are working on the books, and at the end of the year they put you in charge of getting out the annual report and give you an assistant. Will you complain because the responsibility for this important work has been given you? I hope not. It is Opportunity honking at your door.

**Routes to Personnel Work.** If you are a young woman and the day comes when you are asked to interview some prospective employees, Opportunity has rolled up to your door in a shining new twelve-cylinder wonder! What may look like just another odd job heaped upon you because everyone else is busy may be the open door to your future career. Why? Because the posi-

tion of personnel director is among the very best of executive positions open to women, and that first request to interview applicants marks you as a trusted employee and indicates that your firm thinks you may have the necessary qualifications for handling people. Carefully as I have checked the position of office personnel director from San Francisco to New York, I have yet to find a woman in charge of office personnel who had not got her training on the job. Business just does not bring in trained personnel people from the outside to do the employing of its office force. The office personnel director, as I have met her in her clubs in New York, Chicago, and elsewhere, has come up through being first a stenographer, then a secretary or sometimes a head stenographer. Consequently, she knows just what each job requires in skills, character traits, and personality. And what may be equally important, she knows her firm's preferences.

So, if you have a chance at interviewing even one employee, snap it up. And be sure you pick a good one. For if your choice makes good, your score will go up and soon you will be asked to interview others. When this happens, your cue is to begin to study personnel work on the side. Theory plus practice is all important.

**Opportunity through an Idea.** One of my friends tells this story of the way Opportunity approached an office worker she knew. During the World War, Pearl Fitzhugh, a young stenographer, was chosen by her employer to sell thrift stamps to the factory employees. The other women in the office felt sorry for Pearl because of the extra work dumped in her lap. But Pearl sold the stamps and, while she was at it, made friends with the girls in the factory. She became interested in their problems and started a welfare club. This led to the necessity for knowing more about social service, and she enrolled in some courses at a near-by university. The final result of Pearl's initiative was that the vice-president of the company became interested in what she was trying to do and authorized her to institute a welfare program for the company, to be operated for the benefit of its 1,000

factory women. Pearl quite evidently had both eyes and ears open for Opportunity's arrival at her front door.

### THOSE "LUCKY BREAKS" YOU READ ABOUT

**Up through Work You Know.** But sometimes promotion comes not through opportunities to do new kinds of work, but through what seems to be a "lucky break." An automobile dealer told me how he had lost a valued secretary because luck was on her side. An important visiting executive asked the dealer to lend him a stenographer to take some letters. The dealer called his own secretary; the letters were dictated, and in a short time back they came, perfectly typed, correctly spelled—in every way model letters. The visiting executive was so impressed he said to the dealer, "I need a secretary in Detroit, and if you have no objection, I'd like to employ yours." Since the request came from his principal, the dealer could not refuse. "What a break!" he said, telling me the story. "Out of 20,000 employees of this company, my secretary, in another city, got the chance to show the Big Boss what she could do."

**Up through Other Knowledge.** Again, there are times when promotion comes not so much through what one is doing as through a demonstrated knowledge of something else. John Whitaker, after graduating from an American university, studied art for two years in Paris. When John returned home he took the only job he could get—timekeeper in a large manufacturing firm in Chicago. His employers had a number of French customers, and one day a party of them arrived unexpectedly at the Chicago plant. They could speak no English and there was considerable flurry in the executive office. "Get someone who can speak French and send him in here right away," the word went out. A foreman who knew John spoke French sent him to the office post haste. With much gesticulating to the visitors, John was introduced and was then instructed to show them not only the plant but the city as well. Naturally, he was given plenty of cash to fulfill such a carte blanche order. John spent several days showing Chicago at its best to the foreign contingent.

He made such a hit that, later, when they called on the president of the company in New York, they told him all about the courteous young man who had acted as their tireless cicerone. At once the president wrote to Chicago to know why such a young man was only a timekeeper.

Not long afterward, another group of French customers came over. Having heard so much about his courtesy to their fellow countrymen, they asked that John be allowed to show them about. This established John as a valuable employee. Officials of the company say he is going places in their organization. It was John's good fortune that, plus being a polished young man, he spoke French fluently. Otherwise, he might never have come to the attention of the heads of the business.

### PROSAIC PROMOTION IS PROGRESS, TOO

But sometimes promotion does not come suddenly or spectacularly. It may come through the mere prosaic heaping upon your already overburdened shoulders of more of the thing you've been doing. More responsibility right where you are! Well, that is all right, too. Maybe your career is to be carved out by your going right up in the kind of work you are doing—bookkeeping, stenographic, or clerical. There are outstanding jobs ahead of you in your special type of work, and as you gradually learn to do more things in this field, you will shorten the distance between your beginning job and the top positions. Some very good managerial positions grow out of the faithful performance of office duties. The majority of these, with titles and substantial salaries, go to the male workers in the department. For the number of organizations that prefer men as head clerks, office managers, and department heads is legion and far exceeds those that promote women to these positions.

### CREATING ORIGINAL JOBS WITH FUTURES

But don't let that stop you! More and more clever young women are using shorthand as an entering wedge to the field of

their choice and are developing interesting, original jobs for themselves. Here is a good example of what I mean:

**The Radio Route.** Leone Aiken graduated from an Eastern college for women and returned to her home in the Middle West. She was determined to work in radio, although she was not at all sure just where. She applied for work at the broadcasting stations in her home city and then branched out to a job hunt in New York. But, as she said, "They just laughed at me." For Leone had nothing whatever to offer but her eagerness to work in radio, her knowledge of writing, and her lovely speaking voice. Alas, the woods are full of attractive girls with these unproved qualifications. So Leone returned once more to her home town. In desperation, she went to the head of an excellent business school for girls. "I guess I'll have to take a business course, but it's radio I want," she told the director of admissions.

"Maybe we can help you get into radio through shorthand," the director encouraged her. "Along with secretarial courses we give several months' training in any specific field a student elects. You might like to choose advertising, so that you could learn something about radio and how to write commercials. You would get some of the vocabulary, too, which would help you later, if we are able to get you a position taking dictation from an executive for a broadcasting company."

This was so encouraging to Leone that she took a tuck in her career plan. For almost nine months she concentrated on shorthand and typewriting and everything she could learn about radio. To make a long story short, with her training over, Leone went up like a rocket. She had something to offer now. Before long, through her school's placement bureau she became secretary to the program director of a radio station. This gave her a chance to learn how programs were put together. Soon she was filling in for her chief when he had more programs to prepare than he could get on to the air on time. Presently Leone began to suggest ideas for educational programs on subjects in which she was especially informed. Today Leone's office door carries the legend "Educational Director," and she is an important factor in



Station ZZZ's reputation for excellent programs. This is a true story, though neither "Leone Aiken" nor "ZZZ" is listed in any directory.

#### INITIATIVE AN ASSET FOR THE CLIMBER

Among other assets, Leone had initiative, which is necessary along with the ability to take responsibility, if one is to step up into a better job. But, as with assuming responsibility, you have to be careful not to use too much initiative until you have learned a firm's policies as well as how to perform many tasks. Otherwise, you might be a self-starter going into reverse. Of what avail to start in the wrong direction or to start the wrong things?

However, the error is far more often a lack of initiative than a premature abundance of it. Recently, when I was on a speaking trip that took me before audiences of career girls in the Central States, a very interesting young woman sought me out. Among other things she said: "I've been for ten years in the office of a big rubber company here, and I've watched them come and go. One thing I never have been able to figure out is how seemingly intelligent girls can sit down right in the midst of a thousand things crying to be done and see nothing to do. They actually fold their hands in idleness and wait to be told what to do next." Though I could not throw much light on the reasoning of the idlers, I could very well understand why this young woman had held her job and progressed.

**Interest and Enthusiasm.** Of course, initiative is the natural complement of interest and enthusiasm—those two qualities that are almost certain indications of success ahead. But it is one thing to do the more or less routine things that anyone with a spark of interest can see need to be done and another thing to make constructive suggestions for improving one's own work or the work in general. So, having interest and enthusiasm, strive to cultivate a mental attitude that will engender initiative. But be sure not to neglect the wholesome brake on impetuosity—caution. In our great enthusiasm to be useful, we are apt to rush in headlong before we have established the confidence of others in

our good judgment or even before our ideas are well thought out. That is why we cannot be allowed to initiate things before we have become seasoned in business generally and in our own business specifically. A very wise woman I once knew often said, "A right thing done in the right way at the wrong time can be as disastrous as the wrong thing."

**Presenting Creative Ideas.** So, while you are letting your creative mind play around with ideas that might be valuable to your employer, do not present them until you are sure you have all the kinks out of them. When you are sure you have a sound idea and that the time has come to broach it, be equally sure you take it to the right person. Many a good idea has been lifted whole because its originator talked too exuberantly to the wrong person. It sometimes even happens that your immediate superior is not above stealing ideas and presenting them as his (or her) own brilliant contributions. When this happens there is nothing you can do about it. I mention this, not to discourage you, but to warn you to keep still about your world-beaters until such time as you yourself can take them to the top—or its equivalent.

**Encouraging Initiative.** It is in order that employees with original ideas may get a fair opportunity to present them without interference that some businesses maintain question boxes into which anonymous or signed suggestions for improving service, or what not, may be placed. When the heads of a business think highly of any such suggestions, they seek out the men and women who offered them. In spite of the many harebrained ideas I have seen suggested, my experience leads me to believe that alert executives keep their eyes and ears open for the constructive brain storms of even the newest and lowliest employee. I know a young woman whose suggestions put in a box in a department store got her from behind the counter into the advertising department where she most wished to work.

**When Ideas Are Discouraged.** Let's suppose you think you have *the big idea* for a new product that the company could manufacture or a new way of advertising to attract wide attention. You suggest it in person or via the box route, and nothing hap-

pens. Shall you go on, trying to force it through? Not if you are wise. Forget your dream child for the time being, anyway. The test of your interest and enthusiasm lies in your ability to take a beating of this sort and come up smiling. You would have to do so even if ideas were your stock in trade, as in the advertising business. So don't let disappointment sour you on your job when your work is, after all, specifically office work. The firm probably has chemists or other specialists to work out new products and advertising experts to create its advertising ideas. Why not devote your efforts to winning distinction in your own special field? By the law of growth from within, your chances are far greater in your own specialty than outside it, unless you are in the wrong field.

Your inability to put across a fundamentally sound idea connected with your own work may indicate that there is something wrong with the setup beyond your power to correct. If, after careful thought, you see this clearly and feel that your future there is limited, you have a legitimate reason for quietly beginning to look about for another job in a more progressive organization.

**A New Boss Needed.** A young man I know found his work in the display department of a high-grade specialty shop greatly hampered by the lack of organization. Also he found it hard to endure the constant nightwork necessitated by the slack methods of his superior. So he tried to suggest to the head of his department ways to systematize the work with less overtime (for which they were not paid) and equally good results. His chief told the young man his job was to trim windows, not to plan the running of the department. "This kind of work can't be organized," was his alibi for his own lack of executive ability. There was nothing to do, if my young friend wanted to keep his job, but confine his initiative within the limits of his own work and refrain from criticism or suggestion as to the management of the department. Eventually, of course, being ambitious, he will look for a job where sound executive planning and sensible delegation of work will give him a better opportunity to progress with his creative ideas for display.

**Some Employers Dislike Ambition.** Business sometimes is a bit wary of "live wires" for the reason that they are inclined to put on entirely too much pressure. In an effort to get their ideas across or win promotion they become egocentric. Perhaps they have taken too much to heart the saying that no one is interested in you but yourself and feel, therefore, the necessity to push themselves forward. But business has a different point of view. The personnel director of an Eastern broadcasting company says that too persistent employees are a nuisance, that they are inclined to be restless in their jobs and, in consequence, make trouble. Without altogether agreeing with this point of view, I pass it along for your consideration.

Then too, I have met employers who say frankly that they prefer to employ those who are not too ambitious. It is more comfortable for the business not to be constantly making adjustments in personnel and pay roll. And more economical, too. I regret to say there are businesses whose policy is always to pay low salaries and never allow anyone to advance very far. It is all right to start with such firms for the sake of experience. But, if you are ambitious, having acquired what you need, you will have to go elsewhere to be paid for it.

### CHANGING JOBS, TO GET UP FASTER

A survey made by the National Federation of Business and Professional Womens' Clubs showed that 43 per cent of their members changed jobs during the war. Patriotism, doubtless, sent many of these women into war industries, but I am sure that higher salaries were a large contributing factor. Employees who were afraid to leave fair positions when jobs were scarce became more independent when office workers were in demand.

It is impossible to lay down general rules for quitting one job in the hope of landing another with better promotional possibilities. All I can say is, "Think things through." By keeping mentally alert to what is going on around you and viewing your situation objectively, you should know whether it is wise to begin looking around for something else. You should also know *when*

to do this. You will, of course, consider your present employer in making any change. You owe the present job something. The question is, how much?

Now a word of caution. Beware of becoming discouraged too soon. The way to the top or anywhere near it is a long road. If it were possible to get into executive work after one had been in the business world only a year or two there would be little ahead to look forward to. Also, if everyone were slated for the top, there would be nothing but *captains* of industry. No soldiers in the ranks. And the salaries paid to executives would be little more than young workers get now. So be thankful that there are fewer top jobs, that they are worth working for, and that they pay well when you do land one of them.

#### WHAT DO YOU WANT MOST FROM BUSINESS LIFE?

**Some Want Money or Security.** Success means different things to different people. To some, money is the all-important thing. They will slave at uncongenial work and in unpleasant surroundings for the sake of what money can provide. Families, hobbies, and luxuries, and what they cost, may completely condition the point of view of such workers. To others, being happy in their work comes first. To still others, success is an end in itself. These ambitious ones like the prestige that goes with making good. In fact, a title and some publicity often outweigh the increased income. Yet another type of person will sacrifice everything for security. You find these individuals most often in State or Federal Civil Service jobs or in large corporations that have a paternal policy, where they may never get very high but where they are certain of steady work, of pay indefinitely, and of retirement with a pension in their old age. There is a great deal to be said for each of these points of view. The sooner you determine which is yours the happier you will be in your business life.

**Others Want Pleasant Surroundings.** On the other hand, if you are one of those persons who prefers working for pleasant people, even at a low salary, you may think it worth while to advance as far as you can and then stay on indefinitely. Ethel

Harrower's first job was in a bank. She was greatly impressed with the fact that tea was served every afternoon and that her equals and superiors were "such nice people." Ethel's school thought she was worth more than she was being paid and soon got her a job at \$5 a week more. But, after three days on the new job, Ethel went back to the bank. The congenial atmosphere meant more to her than a higher salary. So, it may be well worth while to analyze yourself and your temperament and see what means the most to you. Then, as you plot your plans for getting ahead, you can be governed by your fundamental preferences.

### GOING INTO BUSINESS FOR YOURSELF

But maybe you have been indifferent as to what you get out of a job because you plan to go into business for yourself. "I'll be my own boss," you say. This is the illusion that leads so many to seek happiness and success, not through working for others, but for themselves. I say "illusion," for the truth is that the owner of a business has as many bosses as he has customers. And sometimes they are harder to deal with than the pepperiest employer ever dared to be.

A business of one's own is certainly not to be thought of by beginners. Running a business calls for knowledge not only of the line of business you undertake, but of fundamental business practices. This can be got only through experience—and plenty of it. Therefore, my advice to beginners who think they'll start their own businesses because they can't find jobs is, "Get your experience on somebody else's money."

There is nothing wrong with having an eventual business of one's own as the goal in a career plan. But it should be something to look forward to and to save for, not an escape from unemployment, unpleasant working conditions, or trying bosses. That many people do start their own businesses ill-advisedly is indicated by the records of failures for small businesses. Dun and Bradstreet list beginners' handicaps as responsible for 66.5 per cent of such failures. There are persistent rumors that

many returned servicemen plan to go into business for themselves. Let us hope that they know the businesses and that they will succeed.

If your own shingle over a shop is your ambition, tuck your dream away for many years to come. Don't be tempted to get it out and dust it off until you have reached the top in your field on someone else's pay roll.

### STUDY THE BUSINESS CAREFULLY

But perhaps we are digressing a bit, so let's return to our original subject. You can easily see that there is more to this matter of stepping up than merely doing your best work from day to day. You are going to have to use your mind as well as your skills. The first day you go to work is none too soon to begin studying the business in which you find yourself. Get together the company's advertising and anything else you can, and inform yourself about the firm which from now on will be your meal ticket. Absorb all the printed information you can; this will probably be far more accurate than what other employees tell you. Also study the organization itself. This is the right way to get a true picture of the firm and of your place in it. No matter how tiny your job may be, it is actually an important one. If this were not so, the job would be eliminated and there would be no place for you.

**Study the Other Employees.** You can often learn much by observing the working habits of other employees who have progressed from junior positions such as yours. And sometimes you can learn a great deal about the standards of your employer by appraising the employees as a whole. If the routine is smooth and quiet without undue supervision, you may be sure you are working for a businesslike organization. Evidently they prefer to employ high-grade workers who give a full day's work without prodding—and they get it.

If, on the other hand, you find yourself in an office filled with loud-mouthed individuals who soldier on the job unless under observation, you may be equally sure that your employer is being imposed upon by different employees. To get anywhere in

such a setup, you will have to accept unpopularity with "the gang." You will be forced to do good work independently of them, on the chance that someone in authority will notice you and appreciate the difference.

**Ascertain Firm's Promotional Policy.** Should you decide, after some months of combined work and observation, that you are working for a firm you would like to stay with, try to learn what its promotional policy is. You will not, of course, expect immediate promotion, but it is important to your future that you find out just what you must do to get ahead and how far you can go. Ascertain the answers to the following:

How long have some of these young people been working for the company?

Have they been advanced?

Are they stuck at the same job they began with?

From what group are the junior executives drawn?

Who reach secretarial positions?

Do the better jobs go to those within the organization?

Do key positions go to persons brought in from the outside?

These are vital questions to you, for, unless they can be answered to your advantage, your chance for advancement is pretty slim, and you should know it.

**Promotion from Within.** I am glad to say that promotion from within is becoming more and more the accepted policy among business organizations. In working for a small business where one has direct contact with the heads of the firm, promotion is greatly simplified for those who make good. In a big organization you may never meet anyone farther up than the head of your department or the personnel director who hired you. These individuals act according to rules laid down by those above them, and, although they may recommend you for promotion, the final decision does not always rest with them. Therefore, it is necessary that you find out, before you've been too long on the job, whether you will be given training for more responsible work, and the opportunity to advance when you make good.



If you find you are with an organization which, to the best of its ability, considers the promotional possibilities of its employees at the time it selects them, you are fortunate. For then you can write the name of this firm into your career plan and begin to prepare yourself, on and off the job, to realize your ambitions.

**Promotion from Without.** But should you observe that in your firm the really good jobs go to outsiders, my advice to you is to begin to look around for something else. You will notice I said "observe." Beware of taking office chitchat as gospel for firm policy in this important matter. After you have worked there for six or eight months, if you are still not sure what the promotional policy is, have a talk with the office manager or the personnel director. Ask this executive frankly what your chances are of getting ahead with this company. They will usually answer you with equal frankness. Incidentally, it is a good idea to check up occasionally with one of these persons. It may surprise you to learn they have been watching your work more carefully than you imagined.

**Learn Facts about the Business.** A study of the business in which you are working will quite naturally increase your interest in it. For even the most dry-as-dust organization has its romantic past—the dreams of its founders, their early, courageous struggles, and the difficulties they have surmounted. You will gradually pick up fascinating bits of past history which, pieced together, will form a colorful mosaic and lead you to a better understanding of the present, and even the future, of the firm. And since you are expected to be a loyal employee, you should arm yourself with an intelligent loyalty that knows what you are upholding. Certainly, when outsiders ask you general questions, you should be able to give a more satisfying answer than, "I don't know."

**Learn about the Executive Policies.** While you are acquiring these data, it would be a good plan also to learn all you can about the officers of the company—not in a gossipy way, but something about them as individuals and about their ideas.

What position do they hold in the community?  
 Are they looked upon as having broad views on labor? On wages? On unions?  
 Is their management of the business progressive?  
 Are they making money?

Sometimes you will glean this information from reading the daily newspapers. For, if you work for a firm whose stock is listed and whose top executives are quoted on business conditions or are interviewed regarding their careers, many of the things you should know will be news.

**Study Your Line of Business.** But this business you work for is not the only one of its kind in existence. Your next step is to find out how your employer ranks among his competitors. Something about this particular type of business as a whole is also valuable information. Such inquiry may well provide the leading strings to the promotion you desire.

Suppose, for instance, you have gone to work in the offices of a retail furniture company. You are thrilled to find that the firm has been in business for nearly a century and that the founder was a cabinetmaker of repute. Some of his exquisite pieces of handcraft are in the State Capitol, you hear, and how you long to see them! Will you leave it at that? Or will you begin to read up on furniture in your spare time, so that when you hear someone speak of a "cabriole leg," you will know what is meant? Under such circumstances, you will get a great deal of enjoyment and information if you attend a night course in interior decorating and learn something about woods, textiles, and period furniture.

Real estate, food manufacturing, electrotyping, publishing—whatever the business—each has its rich background, the study of which you can pursue with infinite pleasure and profit.

**Executives Appreciate This Interest.** Such study will often do a lot for you with the powers that be. Many executives will be more interested in helping you get ahead if they see you are sufficiently interested in their business to study it in your spare

time. These men and women will go out of their way to answer questions and explain their business to an eager employee who evinces a desire to learn more than the immediate demands of his (or her) particular job. But be sure you aren't "pulling a phony." Your interest must be genuine.

I recall an occasion when I hopefully engaged a new stenographer who had majored in economics in college. My work at that time consisted of planning and directing the advertising and merchandising for a household product that was sold nationally in grocery stores. When I engaged Hope Andrews I thought she would be especially helpful because, since she was an economics major, she would be interested in seeing the processes of distribution actually at work. So we spent several hours going through my records and "dope" books. I explained what happened to our household cleaner from the time it left the factory, tracing it through the hands of the broker, jobber, chain store, and independent retailer until it arrived on the housewife's kitchen shelf. I went over our newspaper and magazine advertising with Hope, giving her a capsule edition of a course in merchandising.

At the time she showed sufficient interest to keep me at my gratuitous effort. But I soon realized from her work and her attitude that she had actually been bored to tears. She asked no further questions and made mistakes that showed she did not care whether she knew a broker from a jobber. In that office, it was the policy to increase the pay of new stenographers after six months. But when this time came, Hope's work was no better than it had been the first day. Three months later the question of an increase for her came up again, and still no improvement to warrant a raise. At this point, Hope decided there was no future for her in our office, and the office decided Hope was not promotional material, so she was permitted to "resign." The future was there, as the next incumbent quickly realized. But Hope was one of those persons who could not be bothered to acquire background knowledge that would make her valuable to the firm for which she worked.

The owner of a very successful business school in the Middle West feels that this study of the business in which a girl is engaged is so important that she urges her graduates to spend at least one night a month at the public library. "Go to the Business Research section," she tells them, "and read the trade papers in your field. Improve both your knowledge and your vocabulary. Keep your eyes open for new things in this line of business. Be up to date and informed." I can think of no wiser advice to beginners.

### LEARN THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF BUSINESS

But the study of your own business and the field in general is only a beginning! To be really intelligent you must know the general principles underlying the structure of business. Your father and other male relatives may be professional people; hence the "home talk" you hear may not be along business lines. In that case, more than if you have a "trade" background, you should take a general interest in business as such. You are fortunate if you have studied economics, because you will then have the theory of much you will now meet in practice.

**Night Study Recommended.** Banking, finance, and investment; marketing and distribution; selling and advertising; social security, taxation, labor problems, and the difference between gross income and net profit are all topics with which you should have at least a bowing acquaintance. Night school, preferably at the university level, is a vast reservoir of such knowledge. If night classes are not available, there are books on all these subjects. You will be surprised, perhaps, to find their authors make many of them as good reading as any mystery or love story. I venture to say that, no matter what subject you choose, you will find it presented by modern writers in a manner to hold your interest far beyond anything you have imagined. And even if you are neither study-minded nor book-minded you can and should read regularly the financial pages of a good metropolitan newspaper.

**Newspapers Keep You Informed.** While you are at it, begin, if you have not already done so, to read the editorials as well as the front-page news. Now that you are going to be a part of the busy world and not a mere observer or ornament, you will need to be fully informed on every aspect of the times. Listen to your boss's talk, and you will soon realize how politics may affect his business and your job. You must grasp the meaning to you of the passage of certain laws in Washington or the effect of electing a certain man to office. And don't think you can afford to say, "Politics doesn't mean a thing to me." It can literally mean everything, as many citizens learned for the first time during the war. Government, through Selective Service, tax legislation, the Office of Price Administration, and other bureaus, touched intimately the lives of us all.

Now that your school days are over, study on your own; and make your curriculum as broad a one as you can absorb.

When all is said and done, the most important thing in getting ahead is that you desire to do so. If your ambition is of the start-stop-start-stop variety, your progress is bound to be slow. spurts of ambition do not make the grade. But if you have a clear idea of where you want to go and if you watch for the green light, you are far more likely to hit a highway with less traffic to slow you down. So keep your hand on the wheel and your foot on the gas and go!

### QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think lack of initiative heads the list of qualities that prevented office employees from being promoted?
2. Why would the noncooperative and the lazy lose out in promotions?
3. How can saving an employer's time help you to advance?
4. Why is making yourself indispensable the first step in getting ahead?
5. What are the dangers to a beginner of taking responsibility too soon?

6. Why is it impossible to state a definite rule whereby everyone can step up the ladder to success?

7. Name several higher types of positions that often go to women who have proved their ability to take responsibility.

8. Do you think an indifferent person would be likely to have initiative? Can he develop it?

9. When some office employees run out of work, they wait in idleness until they are told what to do. What negative trait does this indicate?

10. Can interest and enthusiasm be cultivated? How?

11. If you present a good idea to your firm and it is turned down, should you

a. Sulk about it?

b. Keep still and forget the occurrence?

c. Quit and tell everybody why?

12. Do all employers like to have ambitious people working for them?

13. Why is it important to find out early what the promotional policies of your employer are?

14. Once you have a job, why is a background knowledge of the business as essential as your skills in getting ahead?

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the relationship between making good on the job and stepping up to a better one.

2. Referring back to the survey in Chapter X, explain why you think deficiencies in skills kept 23.5 per cent of the employees studied from being promoted, whereas this same deficiency lost their jobs for only 10.1 per cent.

3. Discuss why lack of proficiency in English would figure as prominently as it did in promotion. In what types of positions would a knowledge of English be of major importance in relation to advancement?

4. In the survey quoted, carelessness brought about dismissal more often than it prevented promotion. Discuss possible reasons for this.

5. Discuss the meaning of this statement in your text, "Watch your step if you want to step up."

6. What part does turning out quality work play in making an employee indispensable? Granted that employers are impressed

by quantity production, can quality of work be slighted to turn out quantity?

7. Discuss the figure of speech, "Opportunity no longer comes to the door and knocks. It merely drives up to the door and honks." Carry the figure on to cover what happens after one gets into the car.

8. Discuss various ways in which supervising positions can open up. Personnel positions.

9. Name several ways in which promotion often occurs. Discuss the necessity for being alert to recognize potential promotion.

10. Do you agree with the statement in your text, "Carelessness and responsibility never dovetail"? Do you know of any careless people who you think could be entrusted with responsibility?

11. Suppose you have what seem to you excellent ideas for improving the product, the service, or the office methods of the firm you work for. What will you need to bear in mind in planning to present them to the organization?

12. Based on your present knowledge of the business world, which of the following possibilities expresses what you wish most from your business life:

- a. Easy work
- b. An interesting job
- c. Pleasant surroundings
- d. Work with congenial people
- e. A good salary, regardless of working conditions
- f. Prestige in the business world
- g. Security

13. For three years Virginia Smith had been secretary-stenographer for the Owens Building Supply Company. Everything pointed to the fact that Virginia had made herself indispensable to the heads of the firm, but she had not received many raises. Virginia, feeling that they could not get along without her, decided that she would force the issue by threatening to quit unless she was paid more. Mr. Owens told Virginia he could not afford to pay her more. So she quit. When Virginia began looking for another job, she found she could not get a better salary than she had been receiving. After two weeks Virginia called on Mr. Owens and asked him to take her back at her old salary. But the position was filled.

Discuss Virginia's handling of her problem. Where did she make her first mistake?

14. Discuss why a beginner should get experience in his chosen field before going into business for himself.

15. Discuss the advantage to a beginner of going to work for a firm that has a policy of promotion from within.

16. Do you think that following an organized plan of study should help an ambitious employee win advancement?

### PROJECTS

1. Apropos of the expression "business housekeepers," list some duties of the office worker that correspond to home duties. In preparing this list do not limit yourself to the illustrations given in this chapter.

2. In addition to carelessness, name four traits that make some people responsibility dodgers. Opposite each of these list the positive quality that people need in order to succeed.

3. Based on your career plan, name a field in which you think you would eventually like to create a job for yourself. Draw a job ladder showing as the bottom rung a position as stenographer or typist. Label the steps up.

4. Suppose you are a stenographer in the offices of an airplane factory. Make an outline showing how you would proceed to

- a. Study your own firm.
- b. Study the industry as a whole.
- c. Become informed on political and economic conditions affecting the entire industry and the business you work for.
- d. Inform yourself on the probable effect on the industry of wartime advances in aviation.

5. Read the editorial page of your newspaper for several days. Report on articles of value to office workers.



## **CHAPTER XIV**

### **MANAGING YOUR INCOME**

When you first go to work, you automatically become a closed corporation, as it were. You will be earning money for the first time in your life and will learn, I hope, how to live on your income. This should be the first promise you make yourself, because much of your future success on the job may depend on it.

If your beginning salary is small and you do not live at home, you may need to make a considerable adjustment to be able to live on what you earn. Such an achievement will greatly help in advancing your career plans. Moreover, you will be a free agent, able to take a not-so-well-paying job, if you wish, provided that it has future possibilities.

#### **THOSE HORRIBLE EXAMPLES**

From your first working day, you will see around you many who are mismanaging their incomes in one way or another. Some, regardless of how much they earn or how near they are to pay day, will always be "broke." They may have anticipated their salaries by going into debt or been improvident or extravagant. Others, who fritter away their money for junk and expensive lunches, may try to borrow from you to tide them over till pay day. Their frequent failure to repay is further evidence of their scrambled finances.

#### **PLAN TO AVOID DEBT**

At the risk of being thought old-fashioned, I should warn you that your peace of mind will be destroyed by worry if you get into debt and your efficiency will suffer in consequence. It may take Spartan self-control to resist the temptation to spend your

hard-earned money recklessly. You often hear the defense, "It's my own money—I ought to be able to spend it the way I want to!"

You will be able to spend your own money as you want to and have something to show for it, if you will adopt a well-thought-out program covering your personal debits and credits. My suggestion is that you formulate a policy and begin adhering to it the very first day you become employed. Waiting even a week or two is dangerous, considering the lure of easy credit. It is much harder to get out of debt than it is to get in, as countless young employees have discovered.

**Easy Credit Tempts Many.** Debt can sneak up on you in friendly guise. You will find that many stores that carry charge or installment accounts will extend liberal credit to you based on your salary, as soon as you have a job. This makes it all too easy for young people who have not yet learned how to handle money to charge beyond their means. When the inexperienced beginner takes advantage of this generous credit, opening charge accounts with several firms, what happens? He soon finds that the amount left after living expenses are paid does not go far when parceled out to his too numerous creditors. Then the dunning begins. Letters, collectors, and threats make life miserable for the debt-burdened one. Often his employer is notified of the indebtedness, which certainly does not help employer-employee relationships. For nothing more quickly discredits an employee with the heads of a business than to have the details of his mismanaged personal finances brought to their attention.

**Creditors Can Garnishee Salaries.** In many states, creditors are permitted to garnishee the employee's salary. This means they can attach your salary and force your employer to pay a portion of it direct to them. Having a "plaster" put on your salary is bad enough, but the frequent alternative of borrowing from a loan shark at exorbitant interest is worse yet. In fact, borrowing from Peter to pay Paul often brings a far more difficult situation. "Phony" finance companies whose advertising sounds so helpful exist only to take advantage of the jams people with

small incomes get into. Not only are their interest rates out of all proportion to the sum borrowed, but often, owing to the ignorance of the borrower, they collect indefinitely.

**Establish Your Credit.** Of course, I am not speaking against legitimate charge accounts with reputable firms, except to urge you to be careful not to buy beyond your ability to pay within a month or two. If you open a charge account with any store, you are immediately listed with the Retail Merchants' Association in your town. Thereafter, your ability to pay can be checked up by any other store, even in another city, when you apply for credit. You can see how important it is to keep your credit good, since by its fruits you will be known.

**Don't Mortgage Your Future.** Apart from the value of good credit, it is risky to run up bills that will swamp you for months ahead. An unexpected illness or an accident or the sudden loss of your job would, under such circumstances, put you in a serious predicament. I know a case in point.

On his first job after leaving college, James Powell earned \$25 a week; but he spent on a \$50-a-week scale. For years James had looked forward to the time when he could have a bachelor apartment, preferably a penthouse, in New York. So his first move after getting a job was to sign an apartment lease. Then he bought furniture on a lease account. Jim at once opened several charge accounts at Fifth Avenue stores, because this was part of the picture he had envisioned for himself. Among other things, he charged a \$50 dinner suit, although his old one would have done; also, a \$10 bottle of perfume for his sister. Doing the town's night life often made Jim late with the rent. Friends who dropped in for cocktails nonchalantly used the telephone, and soon there was an unpaid telephone bill, with the company threatening to discontinue the service.

The implications of all this had not yet dawned on Jim when the Selective Service Act went into effect and he saw himself headed for the army. The day James was drafted, all he had to show for his first six months' work was an unbreakable lease, some half-paid-for furniture, and a sheaf of overdue bills from

companies that were no longer so polite as when he was opening the accounts.

Fortunately James was able to sublet his apartment to people who also took over the furniture and paid him enough to settle most of his other debts. His family squared up the rest, not without acid comment on his colorful start in life. Today, newly discharged from the army, James says it's the simple life for him as a civilian. "I'm going on practically a cash-and-carry system this time," he says.

You notice that James took advantage of the attractive-sounding offers of installment buying. He was one of many who, through this alluring plan, spend their money far in advance of earning it.

**Installment Buying a Popular Form of Debt.** In an apartment building where I once lived, the manager told me she was trying to help a young couple in the house work out their financial problems. "That little bride comes in every day with skimpy-looking paper bags. I am sure those two aren't eating enough, or properly," she said. And she was right. It developed that the young man had a reasonably good job with the telephone company. His salary was \$150 a month. But, after they had paid their rent and made the payment on their car, they had only \$50 left—\$50 on which to eat, clothe themselves, and keep their car going! The young wife tried to make food money stretch, in the poorest possible way, with delicatessen buying. But neither she nor her husband could be made to see it was the car that put everything else out of balance. "We have to have a car," they protested. "All our friends have. If we didn't what would we do week ends?" Eventually they decided to move to a cheaper apartment and keep up their front on the highway.

Here is an even sadder tale. I have a friend who was once the answer to prayer of every installment salesman. Angela loved things for her home, and, when the salesman showed her how easily she could have an electric washing machine, an ironer, a vacuum cleaner, and an electric refrigerator, she signed the contracts. What was \$1 or \$2 a week on this and \$5 on that? Now Angela and her husband were also buying their home, their

furniture, and a car. These, too, were being bought on deferred payments. One fine day, Angela woke up to discover that between them they had signed away her husband's salary for several years to come. The few unmarked dollars a week left to them had to be doled out, bit by bit, for their most pressing cash necessities. But the contracts were signed, and there was nothing to be done except for Angela to cut down on every smallest item of their living and for her husband to work his head off to meet the payments.

One day a brush fire swept over the hill and burned block after block of the suburb in which they lived. Everything went, except the car. But according to the lease contracts, Angela and her husband had to go on paying for the house and everything in it quite as if nothing had happened. All that summer they lived in a tent on the edge of town, laboriously whittling away at their mountain of debt. In the fall Angela went to work and they moved back into town. But it was a long time before this couple became solvent again. I assure you that their home has been run on a cash basis ever since.

Forgive me for painting such a gloomy picture. But it is better to be forewarned against easy credit than to be taken in by the beautiful mirage, all unaware of the tragedy its deception can hold in store.

### BUDGETING KEEPS YOU SOLVENT

One solution to managing your personal finances is to work on a budget. Every young business person I know, who has become adept in salary stretching without debt or worry, budgets expenditures, either actually or in effect. One young stenographer whom I have known since her business-school days never ceases to arouse my wonder and admiration. As a result of both good taste and careful planning, Elizabeth is always perfectly dressed. She has a small apartment of her own and adds lovely furnishings, bit by bit. Yet, if extras pop up, such as a wedding gift or a baby shower, Elizabeth does her part smilingly. Of course, she has learned to do without. I suggested once that we

go to the ballet when it was playing for a few days in our city. "I'd love it," said Elizabeth, "but I'm saving for a new office dress, so this month I can't spend anything for entertainment." She didn't mope about missing the ballet, either, though Elizabeth's secret sorrow is that she couldn't be a dancer. What a wife that girl will make for some young businessman! She will stretch his money so far his head will swim with his surprising affluence.

### BUSINESS GIRLS' BUDGET HELPS ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

There are budgets and budgets. I suggest you look up some of them in the library to get the general idea. You will find that most of them are designed for household use and based on family life. As far as I know, a budget compiled by business girls and reflecting the actual distribution of their earnings does not exist. Such a project could be profitably undertaken by any group of employed girls who wish to make their salaries go further by spending according to plan. The results of such a study would be most helpful to those who assembled the figures and to thousands of other young people who work and live on what they earn.

The budget<sup>1</sup> I am reproducing here was compiled by a widely known training school for secretaries for use in a class on Career Orientation. In lending me this budget for your use the owner of the school wrote, "We use the figure of \$150 per month, a typical salary for an exceptional beginner or a capable girl with one year's good experience. This salary figure is not a median or a minimum; it simply represents the kind of salary figure at which we place our graduates who have the qualifications described." Knowing this school as I do, I am satisfied that the budget herewith presented is based on the best of the standard budgets, adapted to the needs of business girls who, as graduates, have related their experiences to understanding teachers.

Obviously, one's starting or continuing salary would depend not only upon her qualifications but upon the geographical location of the work. Generally speaking, salaries are lower in the

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced by permission of Margaret A. Hickey, principal, Miss Hickey's Training School for Secretaries, St. Louis, Mo.

Southern states, and in smaller cities and towns throughout the country, on the assumption that living costs are lower there.

#### BUDGET FOR EMPLOYED GIRL

Computed on base salary of \$150 a month with income-tax deduction for one individual

	Percentage	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly
<i>Income</i>	100	\$34 62	\$150 00	\$1,800 00
<i>Deductions</i>				
Income tax*	12	\$4 15	18 00	216 00
Social security	1	35	4 50	18 00
<i>Take-home Pay</i>		30 12	130 50	1 560 00
<i>Board and Room</i>	31			
Living at home		10 39	45 00	540 00
<i>Personal Upkeep and Development</i>	17	5 89	25 50	306 00
Cosmetics				
Cleaning				
Laundry				
Medical				
Night-school courses for advancement				
Movies				
Magazines				
Books				
<i>Clothing</i>	15	5 19	22 50	270 00
<i>Lunches and Carfare</i>	15	5 19	22 50	270 00
Transportation				
Estimated \$1 25 weekly				
Lunches				
Approximately \$3 25 weekly				
<i>Savings</i>	10	3 46	15 00	180 00
Insurance, savings account, or government bonds.				

\* This percentage will vary as Federal tax rates change

The fact that \$150 per month can be mentioned as a near-beginning salary is evidence of the way office salaries increased during and following the Second World War. Whether they will remain permanently at these levels remains to be seen.

**Board and Room.** Let us analyze this budget in a few particulars. You will see that the estimated cost given here for board

and room is labeled "living at home," and is based on one's having a generous family. Where a person lives away from home, the cost of a shared room and two meals a day is usually estimated at from \$12 to \$15 weekly. In some larger cities, however, it would be difficult to get satisfactory board and room for that figure. When the allotted 30 per cent does not cover board and room, it will be necessary to dip into the 10 per cent savings fund or trim the 17 per cent personal upkeep allowance to take care of the increased cost of living expenses. In case one's salary is less than \$150, it is probable that both savings and personal upkeep will suffer until a raise makes it possible to bring expenses back to the proper percentage.

**A Car Wrecks Budgets.** You may be one of those persons who feel that they cannot live without keeping a car. If so, you scanned the budget in vain for that item. One of the first shocks of living on what you earn will probably be the discovery that your salary will not provide all the things you had when you lived with your family, and a car may be one of these. For obviously, out of a salary of \$150 a month or less you could not purchase even a considerably used car or maintain one. In case you already own a car, you will have to decide what items on your budget you will eliminate in order to keep the car on the highway. My advice is to let a pleasure car wait until you are earning enough to operate one on a reasonable allowance that takes care of insurance, garage, repairs, gas, and oil. Otherwise the "pleasure" will be doubtful. Experienced motorists will not drive a car one mile unless it is fully covered with insurance, and certainly no young businessman or woman should take the financial risks involved in driving an unprotected car.

Of course, if a car is your only means of getting to work, that is something else again. In that event you would have to "steal" from other classifications in your budget and throw in your streetcar allowance, besides. Even so, you would have such difficulties in remaining solvent that, unless you could arrange for another employee with a car to taxi you to and from work daily, you might find it better to get a more accessible job.



### A BUDGET DISCIPLINES THE BUDGETEER

You may have to take yourself firmly in hand before you are willing to accept the budgeting idea. For budgets take little account of personal indulgences or "I-simply-must-haves." After I have said you must be well dressed, many of you will be shocked at the small dress allowances of carefully considered budgets. But a little later in the chapter I shall show you how it can be done, and done with the fun and excitement that are a part of the joy of buying new clothes, even on a limited sum. The advantage of budgeting is that it helps you face facts, forces you to realize that, if you indulge yourself in one classification, some other item will have to suffer or you will find yourself going without food or getting into debt. Keeping careful track of each day's expenditure and allocating it in your budget will show you where your money goes. Also, it will help you to discover how to live as comfortably as possible on what you earn.

### ALL EMPLOYEES SHOULD SAVE SOMETHING

Even though it may seem to you that it is impossible to save on a salary of \$100 or even \$125 a month, you should try to do so. Otherwise you may find yourself in an emergency without any reserve funds at all. An accident or a sudden illness, with income halted and expenses increased, is a disheartening experience unless you have some money saved. Our Yankee President, Calvin Coolidge, had the right idea on saving when he said, "There are three maxims which have made New England great. 'Use it up. Make it do. Do without.'" This became our wartime motto.

**Saving for Special Things.** Perhaps a more attractive way to be saving is to save for something you want. Saving for a radio, a vacation trip, or a fur coat is a safer way to acquire such things than "on time." For one thing you will not be "paying for a dead horse," and, if misfortune catches up with you, you will have money on hand that can be used. But with better luck, when you have had the fun of the thing you were saving for, you can plunge into another saving project with zest and hope. Pres-

ently you will come to enjoy saving not only for extras but for your future.

Much was learned when, during the war, office workers, like everyone else, made the purchase of war bonds and stamps their chief means of saving. At any time there is no better investment than Government bonds, and those who hold their war bonds until maturity, ten years from purchase date, will receive better than savings bank interest. But more important, they will have helped finance the war.

While the purchase of war bonds was voluntary, the payment of income tax was not. When the exemption for a single person was reduced to \$500, it meant that even beginning office workers paid a small personal income tax. In many cases this represented what would have been their savings.

**Insurance One Way of Saving.** You will notice that, in the budget we have just analyzed, insurance is suggested, along with bank savings and Government bonds, as a way of saving. Many people find life insurance an excellent way to save for the future, meanwhile enjoying protection for their dependents. Having insurance premiums to meet monthly, quarterly, or semiannually forces you to put aside a stated sum in order to be ready with your payments.

Whether you realize it or not, the payments deducted from your salary for Social Security are the best kind of insurance—contributory social insurance operated by the United States Government. Under the Social Security Act, employers and wage earners contribute equally to a trust fund, out of which benefits are paid. You become eligible for monthly insurance payments at the age of sixty-five if you have received, in covered jobs, a certain minimum amount of pay in each of a specified number of calendar quarters. If the wage earner dies before reaching the age of sixty-five, his dependents are eligible for monthly or lump-sum insurance payments; or if he has no family, a lump sum may be paid toward funeral expenses. These things seem far away now, but each month's payment toward later security will add to your peace of mind.

### BUDGETING AID MATRIMONY

Working out a budget and sticking to it is excellent training for wedding bells. Young people who hope to be married will greatly increase their chances of happiness if they have trained themselves to handle money intelligently. It takes fortitude, discipline, and self-sacrifice to live within one's income, however large or small, and these are virtues which, especially when related to spending and saving, are all-important to successful married life.

### GAMBLING IS A LOSING GAME

All this is in direct contrast to the "get something for nothing" idea. But petty gambling brings more heartaches than winnings. Slot machines, the races, sweepstakes, and what not keep some people in a state of delirious expectation and often deep debt. Only those who can afford to lose can afford to gamble. Employers rightly become suspicious of employees who are known to be gamblers. Moreover, all employees who handle money have to be bonded. And bonding companies have an uncanny way of finding out about employee's private lives and habits.

### THAT IMPORTANT ITEM—"PERSONAL UPKEEP"

But let us turn from wise saving for a brighter tomorrow to wise spending for a brighter today. To most of you this will probably mean clothes. And since being well dressed is a business asset, let us go into it thoroughly and see how well we can figure it out.

For your benefit, I asked a young friend of mine in San Francisco if she would be willing to send me the itemized account of her clothes budget over a period of years. I knew she kept one with great pleasure and profit. Here it is, just as she sent it to me. But first let me introduce Faith Hamilton.

### AN ACTUAL STUDY OF A CLOTHES BUDGET

**First, a Success Story.** Faith's first job, right out of business school, was as a stenographer. She was chosen from among several applicants because of a certain sweet earnestness that was

very appealing. But she was young and looked even younger. I remember her office manager, whom I also knew, telling me she had suggested that Faith do her hair less girlishly and wear more businesslike clothes.

During her first months at work, Faith was very timid, but she was determined, too, and her own standard for her work was exceedingly high. After Faith had been working about a year and a half, the manager of her office left to be married. Over six or seven more experienced stenographers she recommended that Faith fill her place, but the executives of the firm hesitated to confirm the choice, because Faith had been with them such a short time and was so young for such a responsible position. However, there was no question but that Faith was the best qualified. Her work was exceptional and she had personality, poise, and dignity. Finally, they gave her the job and they have never regretted it.

**Teamwork Helped This Young Couple.** I want to tell you, too, something of Faith's personal responsibilities. Otherwise I fear you will not take her clothes budget so seriously as I should like you to. Faith married in a year or two and continued to work. John had to help his family, and Faith helped hers. Then too, John had not yet settled on his lifework, and there were several shifts ahead of him before he finally became interested in radio installations and settled down in a radio-equipment firm. Yet the first years of their marriage, John and Faith managed their funds so well that they had a new car every year, for which they paid cash. They bought and paid for a lot on which to build a home. Now the home is built, well on the way toward being paid for, and charmingly furnished.

Nothing but the most careful budgeting could have achieved so much in so short a time—six years. John and Faith worked it out together and each adhered scrupulously to their plan. Faith even budgeted her cigarettes and lunches. Of course, every expenditure for clothes was planned, not only because this was necessary, but because Faith had an appreciation of how much further her clothes allowance would go if

properly handled. She tells me she "stole" a good many of her principles of dress from a woman executive whose clothes plan she admires. I have no hesitation in saying that today Faith Hamilton is one of the best dressed business girls I know. Hers is a real success story, not only in stepping up to a better job quickly and permanently, but in progressively dressing the part. .

**What Percentage for Clothing?** Budget makers say we should spend only 15 per cent of our income for clothing. I do not know what this young friend of mine gets as office manager and secretary to the president of the company. But on a secretary's salary alone of \$150 a month, her expenditures average somewhat less than 15 per cent over four years. Faith has beautifully curly hair, so she is more fortunate than most of us in that she needs neither expensive permanents nor frequent finger waves. Her hands she cares for herself. They always look well groomed, even though she keeps house in addition to her office job.

And now for Faith's budget. The items in capitals in the tabulated expenditures are those that advance her basic wardrobe plan. The odd cents in the totals of many of the items listed are due to the California Sales Tax.

**FOUR-YEAR EXPENDITURE BASED ON AN ANNUAL \$225 CLOTHES BUDGET**  
**First Year**

*January:*

2 girdles	\$ 6 15
2 pairs hose	1 96

*February:*

2 pairs hose	1.02
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*March:*

1 pair blue gloves	1.95
1 pair white gloves	5 00
4 pairs hose	2 25
BLUE COAT	7 12

*April:*

1 white slip	2.56
4 pairs hose	2 42
3 pairs socks	0 51
1 pair blue shoes	5 28

**May:**

No purchases

**June:**

3 pairs socks	\$ 0 72
5 pairs hose	4 35
1 pair tennis shoes	1 54
BLACK FUR COAT	99 94
OLD-ROSE SUIT	23 26

**July:**

BROWN JACKET DRESS	13 13
3 pairs hose	2 44
1 halter	77
1 pair brown sandals	6 08
1 pair brown pumps	5 10
1 brown bag	2 01

**August:**

1 pair white shoes	4 07
2 slips (brown and white)	6 17
2 blouses (brown and white)	4 04
3 bras	3 09
1 pair brown gloves	3 61
1 brown hat	2 04
CAMEL'S-HAIR COAT	20 34

**September:**

1 slip (pink)	2 73
1 slip (white)	3 09
1 pair galoshes	2 04
1 umbrella	4 10
1 red hat	4 10

**October:**

14 pairs hose	12 89
ROSE AND BLUE TOPCOAT	12 88

**November:**

3 girdles	9 27
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**December:**

1 pair brown shoes	5 67
2 pairs hose	1 75
1 black velvet hat	2 04
BLACK CREPE DRESS WITH RED TOP	20 55
1 pair black gloves	3 04
GREEN WOOL, BUTTONS, NEEDLES, AND BUCKLE, FOR KNIT SUIT	6 00

<b>Total</b>	<b>\$329 07</b>
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Analysis of this expenditure shows that this year Faith exceeded her budget by more than \$100. But this was her first major expenditure for two years, and she replaced many basic things. For instance, she now has a black fur coat which she will wear for at least six years. She has a black and red afternoon costume with accessories (to wear with the fur coat), which she will wear hard for two years and then use occasionally for two years more. She has a camel's-hair coat and a brown jacket dress for bad weather, which she will wear two years. She has an old-rose spring suit and a blue and rose topcoat (plaid), to go with it, which she will wear for four years. She is going to make a knit suit, which she will wear for several years. Since it is green, at present she can wear it with her brown accessories and her camel's-hair coat. She also has a blue coat, to piece out last year's spring dress and she can go dining and dancing in her black and red crepe dress. Now let's see what happens the following year.

### Second Year

#### January:

No purchases

#### February:

1 black straw hat	\$ 5 10
3 pairs hose	2 63
1 blue sailor	5 15
1 pair blue shoes	4 50
1 pair brown shoes	2 95

#### March:

BROWN DRESS	5 98
1 pair black shoes	6 08
1 blue piqué blouse	2 01

#### April:

3 pairs hose	2 32
1 pair brown shoes	9 22

#### May:

1 bathing suit	5 10
6 pairs hose	4 88

#### June:

1 pair blue shoes.	9 06
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#### July:

No purchases

*August:*

No purchases

*September:*

1 black felt hat	\$ 5 15
1 green sports hat	3 04
1 slip	1 03
feather, ribbon, green buttons, and belt	1 65
1 green bag	3 04
1 pair green shoes	10 82
3 pairs hose	2 32
2 pairs hose	1 63
1 white vest	1 03

*October:*

3 pairs hose	2 44
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*November:*

No purchases

*December:*

2 pairs hose	1 53
Total	<u>\$98 71</u>

So, in the second year, Faith bought only what would go with and freshen up the basic clothes she already had. She seems to have arrived at the conclusion that cheap shoes are usually an extravagance, because she replaced the blue and the brown shoes bought in February at a much higher cost in April and June. I notice that from now on Faith's price range for street shoes is much higher than it has been. But, even so, she spent less than \$100 during the year. This more than balanced her over-expenditure the previous year, and her expenditure over a two-year period is still less than the \$450 allowed on her two-year budget. Let's see how she manages the next year.

*Third Year**January:*

3 pairs hose	\$ 2 63
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*February:*

4 pairs hose	3 50
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*March:*

1 SILK PRINT DRESS	17 25
1 girdle	2 58
2 gray blouses, (for rose suit)	2 06
1 gray bag . . . . .	3 09



*April:*

1 pair gray shoes	\$ 7 16
3 pairs hose	2 94
6 pairs hose	6 67

*May:*

1 black hat	7 73
COAT AND DRESS (black and white silk print)	23 45
1 pair white pumps	5 10
1 black bag	5 09

*June:*

1 gray hat (for rose suit)	3 04
1 girdle	2 58
1 pair black shoes	5 10

*July*

1 panty girdle	1 05
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*August*

1 pair clips	1 03
1 blue suede hat	1 03
2 pairs gloves	4 64
3 pairs hose	2 47

*September.*

NAVY BLUE JACKET, SKIRT, AND WHITE SWEATER	14 27
1 pair blue shoes	10 04
TWEED COAT (black and white)	25 75

*October:*

6 pairs hose	5 41
1 blue robe	4 10
1 white blouse	4 07

*November:*

No purchases

*December*

6 pairs hose	5 50
Total	<u>\$179 33</u>

So another year Faith is well within her budget. Yet she has three complete new costumes—two silk dresses and a navy jacket suit. She has bought gray accessories for her rose spring suit and she can also wear with it her navy-blue accessories (remember the rose topcoat plaided in blue) which primarily belong with her navy jacket and skirt. In five months of this year she bought nothing, or only stockings or a girdle. She has added, too, a black and white tweed topcoat to her basic wardrobe.

And now we come to the fourth year.

**Fourth Year**

*January:*

4 pairs hose..... \$ 3.25

*February:*

No purchases

*March:*

3 pairs hose..... 2.44

2 pairs hose..... 1.63

1 pair blue shoes..... 13.13

*April:*

1 pair black gloves..... 3.61

1 yellow sweater (for blue jacket and skirt)..... 2.01

1 clip..... 2.01

4 pairs hose..... 3.25

2 girdles..... 5.05

1 blue hat..... 1.03

1 shirt (navy silk)..... 2.32

1 shirt (white cotton)..... 1.03

3 clips..... 4.19

*May:*

1 cotton "dirndl"..... 2.04

4 pairs hose..... 3.25

6 pairs socks..... 1.61

1 play suit..... 0.40

1 pair white sandals..... 3.71

*June:*

2 nightgowns..... 2.06

3-piece play suit..... 6.13

1 pair socks..... 0.30

*July:*

1 white cotton hat..... 1.03

6 pairs hose..... 4.88

*August:*

3-piece BLACK SUIT..... 30.85

2 pairs hose..... 1.63

1 black bag..... 5.67

1 black felt hat..... 3.09

1 pair black suede shoes..... 7.06

*September:*

3 pairs hose..... 3.09

1 green felt hat (for knit suit)..... 4.12

*October:*

1 pair green suede shoes	\$ 10 04
1 pair galoshes	2 52
1 pair green gloves	1 55
BLACK AND BLUE CREPE DRESS	14 41
1 blue sweater	2 05
1 pair black sandals	2 05
1 pair slippers (bedroom)	1 84

*November:*

4 pairs hose	3 25
1 black belting hat	4 12

*December:*

Veiling (for velvet hat)	1 01
Total	<u>\$168 71</u>

And there is the four-year clothes expenditure of a well-dressed young businesswoman. In the fourth year Faith again kept well below her budget. She added a three-piece black suit and accessories, and a blue-and-black dress that she could wear to the office or for dining and dancing, with her fur coat. She bought green accessories for her green knit suit and wears it with her black-and-white tweed coat.

You will notice that Faith purchased only two nightgowns in four years. That was because as a bride she started out with the loot from dozens of showers! If you live in the East, instead of San Francisco, as Faith does, you will have to spend money for hot-weather street clothes. By studying Faith Hamilton's budget you will see there are some items that you could well do without, and some that you must do without, in order to adapt the budget to your particular needs and to current prices.

As you have doubtless realized, Faith's budget was compiled just before the Second World War, when prices were low. Although prices have gone considerably higher, at present writing they seem to be going down and there are indications that before long they will be back to normal. I preferred not to change this clothing budget because the basic planning is sound. It will be relatively simple for you to make individual eliminations and readjustments until prices again approximate these figures. Remember, too, that Faith had an average balance of \$31 a year

left out of her \$225 annual clothes budget. You will have that to spend, provided that you are earning \$150 per month.

#### THE SAME RULE APPLIES TO MEN'S CLOTHES PURCHASES

And now for the young men. Although their clothes problems are less complicated than those of the girls, their expenditures for clothing call for just as much thought. Since the same general budgeting rule of 15 per cent for clothing should be followed, the budget given below is based on 15 per cent of a salary of \$150 per month. The costs quoted are postwar prices. There is no need to refer here to the shortage in men's clothing and the high prices that met returning servicemen.

Suffice it to say that, as men's clothing has become more plentiful, prices have begun tapering off and that indications are that they will continue downward for some time. Eventually the careful male shopper will be able to make his money go further than the quoted prices would permit and to live comfortably within his budget.

We shall assume that you already own one good suit, a good overcoat, some shirts, ties, socks, pajamas, handkerchiefs, suspenders, and belts. Your overcoat should last several years and your suit at least two. Granted that you have such a good start, your first year's expenditures should run something like this:

6 pairs shorts	\$ 6 00
6 undershirts	4 50
12 pairs socks	16 00
6 shirts	18 00
1 wool (winter) suit	45 00
1 gabardine (spring) suit	35 00
1 cravenette reversible coat to wear as spring overcoat	30 00
2 pairs shoes	20 00
1 coat sweater	6 00
2 sports shirts	7 00
1 pair slacks	10 00
1 felt hat	7 50
1 pair gloves	5 00
1 pair pajamas	5 00
Accessories	10 00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$225 00</b>

Suppose, however, that you start at only \$125 per month. Then, instead of having an annual clothes budget of \$225, you will have to see what you can do on \$187.50 a year. This will require very careful figuring. Again I hope that you will be well stocked with clothes when you go to work.

The following plan was worked out by a well-known firm of men's clothiers as a suitable budget for an "average man of the business world." The one-half of an overcoat was explained as meaning an overcoat every two years. Here is the budget plan:

6 pairs shorts	\$ 6.00
4 undershirts	3 00
2 pairs shoes	20.00
9 pairs socks	12.00
5 shirts	15.00
2 suits	80 00
2 hats	15.00
½ overcoat	25 00
Accessories	11.50
Total	<u>\$187.50</u>

This is pretty close figuring, I admit, and, as sometimes happens in the lower salary brackets, it may be necessary for you to juggle the items in your budget a bit. However, you now have a basis upon which to figure your most pressing needs in relation to what you already own. Especially when prices are high, you will be better dressed on less money if you have a plan for dressing and a system for spending.

In using either of the above budgets you will be able to make worth-while savings over the figures quoted, if you will shop carefully, watching sales for bargains. When your job does not leave you with free time for shopping, perhaps you can enlist the services of a woman member of your family. A further tip! On a falling market you can save by buying only what you absolutely must have. Each time you delay a purchase until that item has been lowered in price you will save money.

**A RAISE WILL BALANCE THE BUDGET**

Of course, there is nothing that will help out your budget so much as an increase in salary. Perhaps you have felt for some time that you were doing work that entitled you to more, but the all-important "raise" has not come. Shall you ask for it? If so, how?

I am reminded of a young man just starting out in the business world who was given a position by a family friend, more or less out of sheer good will. The lad's work was selling roofing material. He rushed about for a month or six weeks, covering much territory but bringing in few orders. His living expenses, however, were a bit beyond his income. At the end of his six weeks' initiation, he went to the head of the firm and asked him for more money. "I can't possibly live on what I'm making," he said conclusively. "Would ten dollars a month more help you out?" his boss wanted to know. "I'll say it would!" my young friend beamed. "All right, we'll make it that," his employer promised. "But I think you'd better begin looking around for something else. Your sales don't indicate you're very well suited to this type of work." The sequel of this story is that when the young man looked around, all he could find was a job that paid a third less than he was getting before his family's friend increased his salary. And worse still, his parents insisted that he live on it until he learned to adjust his standard of living to his income.

**YOU EARN THE RAISE FIRST**

The fact that one needs more money is not a reason for asking for a raise. Everyone always needs more income, or could use it. The reason must be a better one than that. What about those who say, "I'm doing more responsible work all the time. Yet my salary stays right where it was"? Believe me, not even that is a good reason!

A friend of mine who is in charge of fifty or more employees in a large office says, "Employees must be worth more money

long before they get it. First they must prove their worth over a period of time, through greatly increased services. Demonstrated ability comes first—then increases."

### LEARN YOUR FIRM'S "RAISE" POLICY

Many business firms have a definite policy regarding salary increases and a stated time, once or twice a year, for dispensing them. When you have worked for such a firm and fulfilled their set requirements as to length of service and satisfactory work, you will get your raise along with the other eligibles. If, although you have met the requirements, you are overlooked at the regular increase period, you have every right to ask for an explanation.

But perhaps your firm has no such fixed policy. Then you have to take your courage in your hands and your request to headquarters. Be sure you have all the facts well outlined and are prepared to prove your right to an advance in pay. Only your increased value to the business is a sound reason for asking for more money.

### GET ON THE PRODUCTIVE SIDE

You may be doing work that is worth considerably more money to your firm, but you will be unwise in asking for an increase unless you know the business is making a good profit. Bear in mind that all office work is on the nonproductive side of business and is counted as part of the overhead. It is really a service department—necessary, but producing no income. The sales force has to bring in the money with which to pay the stenographic, bookkeeping, and clerical salaries. It is more difficult for an office worker to justify his salary than it is for employees who are on the productive side of business. Since this is so, you should not expect employers to be willing to pay sizable salaries for this type of work. If your income is to rise substantially, you will have to show ability a little beyond mere service department requirements. One way to do this is to increase your out-

put in whatever job you are in, and do such good work that you will attract attention to your executive ability! With a weather eye out for a junior executive position in some other department, such as advertising, selling, or transportation, you may be able to coordinate your career plan and your promotional objective—and presto! you have the raise!

### QUESTIONS

1. Do office workers, as a rule, handle their personal finances in a businesslike manner?

2. Why is it important that young people just starting in business learn to manage their incomes intelligently?

3. When does your text suggest that you should adopt a well-thought-out program regarding your personal debits and credits?

4. Mention several ways in which a business beginner can become hopelessly involved financially, almost before he or she is aware of what is happening.

5. Can an employee hide his financial embarrassment from his employer indefinitely? Why not?

6. Mention the circumstances under which the use of a charge account with a good store is desirable. When is the use of installment buying proper?

7. Why is budgeting offered as the remedy for financial mismanagement?

8. Apart from keeping him solvent, what does conscientious budgeting do for the budgeteer?

9. Do you believe that every income producer should save something out of each pay check? Or do you think the low-salaried worker can safely put off saving until he is earning enough to have something left over for saving? If so, how will he determine when the time to begin to save has arrived?

10. What, besides immediate protection for dependents, do you gain by taking out life insurance when you are young?

11. How much do you think a beginner on \$18 a week should allow himself daily for lunch? What can he get for that amount? Would this be an adequate lunch?

12. If you wanted a raise, would you go to the boss and tell him that

a. You can't live on your present salary (giving reasons)?



- b. You are doing work that is worth more (and prove it)?
- c. You are discouraged because your work is evidently not appreciated?
- d. You will quit unless you are given more money?

13. Why is there a limit beyond which office salaries cannot be raised? What is the answer to this for the ambitious young person who is worth more money and is willing to concentrate all his abilities and effort on earning more?

14. Can a married couple operate a joint budget without teamwork?

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The following advertisement ran in a New York newspaper:

Young man who gets paid on Monday and is broke by Wednesday would like to exchange small loans with young man who gets paid on Wednesday and is broke by Monday.

Discuss systematic borrowing as a solution for the financial problems of office workers.

2. Young people usually have to work for a number of years before they earn as much as their school and college allowances or the equivalent of the living provided at home. Discuss how you think youthful employees can bridge this gap and adjust their living to their salaries.

3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages, to the beginning worker, of easy credit.

4. Agnes Wood earns \$30 a week. She lives at home and pays \$10 a week for board and room. Her lunches and carfare average \$5 a week. She figures that she has \$15 a week to do with as she pleases. On this assumption Agnes buys a fur coat on "time" and signs a contract agreeing to pay \$10 a week for twenty-six weeks. Agnes feels that she is playing safe because she is staying within her present salary. Why is this poor reasoning? What will happen if Agnes cannot meet the terms of her contract?

5. Could the plan that Agnes has made for handling her salary be called budgeting? Compare her plan with the budget on page 364, and state the weaknesses in Agnes's method of dividing her money among three or four items only.

6. Talk with some of your young friends who are working, and find

out what per cent of their salaries they spend for personal upkeep. How much of this goes for clothes? What for dentistry?

If they spend more than 15 per cent, do you think they are justified? Why? On what items do they cut down, in order to get more for personal upkeep?

Do they pay cash? Run charge accounts? If the latter, do they have thirty, sixty, or ninety days in which to pay? Does this credit help them with their personal financing?

7. Discuss the advantages of sticking closely to a budget, as compared with the policy of spending as you go. Which method requires the greater mental effort? Which brings the greater peace of mind?

8. Turn to the clothes budgets for young men earning \$125 and \$150 a month, as shown on pages 377 and 378. Suppose you are earning this salary. Do you think that you could work out a satisfactory business wardrobe without exceeding 15 per cent of your salary figured on an annual basis? Would you change any items in the plans suggested here? If so, state what substitutions you would make, and why.

9. If you feel that you could not dress well for business on 15 per cent of a monthly salary of \$110, what readjustments of your budget would you make in order to get more clothes? Justify this shifting of funds by proving that you could manage the other items for less than the budget allots to them.

10. Explain what the following terms mean, as used in this chapter: An attachment on your salary; phony finance companies; budgeteers; borrowing from Peter to pay Paul; mortgaging your future; garnishee; legitimate charge accounts; buying on "time."

Also explain the following related terms not used in this chapter, but which you see in the daily paper: Loan sharks; lease account; investigate before you invest; lessor; lessee.

11. Have you found it easier to save for something you want, such as a radio, a car, or a vacation, than just to save, on principle? What is the difference?

12. Why is business justified in expecting employees to be worth more than they are paid for some months before it rewards them with increased salaries?

## PROJECTS

1. Assume that you are earning \$25 a week or the equivalent monthly salary of \$100. Take the budget shown on page 364 and, using the

percentages specified for the different classifications, such as board and room, clothing, etc., make an itemized budget showing what you could spend for each, on a monthly salary of \$100.

Before doing this, check costs in your community and see whether they correspond favorably with those used in compiling this budget. For instance, can you get board and room in your city for what this budget allows for food and shelter? If not, rearrange the budget, allowing more for this major item and taking it away from funds allotted elsewhere. Be prepared to give the reasons for your change.

2. Many young people who like privacy are intrigued with the idea of living alone as soon as they are on their own. A secretary who earns \$150 a month says that budgeting has taught her she cannot afford to operate an apartment by herself. When she tried it out, spending \$60 a month for rent, she either had to eat sketchily, or she had no new clothes. Based on the \$150 budget reproduced in this chapter, figure out how the total budget is unbalanced by stepping up the item of shelter to \$60 a month. What classifications would you cut down if you spent 40 per cent of your income for rent? How would the strain be eased if three young men or three young businesswomen shared an apartment for which they paid \$75?

3. Turn again to the budget on page 364, and copy the list of eight items under the general heading Personal Upkeep and Development. Work out in detail the amount you would allow for each item, keeping within the 17 per cent allocated for this over-all classification.

Since it is difficult to estimate the sum you may have to spend for medical care, handle this item so as to accumulate a reserve for illness or accident. Even though you may be unbelievably healthy, it is not safe to gamble on needing nothing for doctors or drugs. While dentistry is not mentioned in this budget, it is doubtless included under "Medical." Perhaps your parents can tell you what they have paid for your medical and dental care during the past year. Divide this sum by 12, and start with this as your estimated monthly budget item under "Medical." It will, obviously, be either too high or too low; but at least you will realize the importance of this heading before going "all out" for night classes, movies, or reading matter.

4. Ascertain what laundry and dry cleaning charges are in your city. Figure out what allowance you will need to make for these items in your budget in order to present the neat appearance business requires. Young men find that the laundering of shirts is a considerable item;

whereas young women who launder many of their things at home spend more for drying cleaning than men do.

5. Write a 500-word paper on The Advantage to an Office Worker of Keeping His Credit Good.

6. Study Faith Hamilton's clothes budget carefully. She is spending 15 per cent of a \$150 salary. Suppose you are earning \$100 a month, what would you eliminate to make Faith Hamilton's wardrobe fit your lesser income?

## CHAPTER XV

### PERSONALITY IN BUSINESS

Many employers declare that personality is the quality that gets the job. Apparently it is often the deciding factor in an employment interview. With several applicants from whom to choose, it is only natural that the employer should select the one whose personality is most pleasing to him.

This being so, how important it is that young people about to start job hunting should find out what employers mean by personality. If I can give you a few tips now, you will still have time to take inventory of your personality assets and liabilities and to start cultivating this mysterious something so much in demand.

First let's do a little eavesdropping in an employment agency. The time is nine o'clock any morning, and the telephones are busy with calls from employers asking that applicants be sent them for interviewing. Or perhaps they are reporting decisions on those applicants interviewed the day before.

#### WANTED: PERSONALITY

The first employer says, "Send me a stenographer with an attractive personality." You notice he mentions this before launching into a description of the job. The next request is for "a young man with a clean-cut personality." The third call is from a personnel director who says, "I'd like to interview typists who can do fifty or more words a minute. But don't send anyone who hasn't a pleasing personality." Then an office manager rings up to say: "We don't like that girl you sent over yesterday. She lacks personality."

Before noon there are calls for a PBX operator with a "telephone personality," and a comptometer operator with a "nice

personality." Just as you are leaving, an irate man on the line says, "I wouldn't have that bookkeeper around. He may know his stuff, but he has a 'disagreeable personality.'"

### IS A WOMAN'S PERSONALITY LARGELY APPEARANCE?

It is quite evident that business is looking for personality, you decide. But what in the world is meant by the word? You ask the employment agency whether it is appearance which is wanted. "Not entirely," the interviewer tells you. "Appearance counts a lot, of course, but what these employers want goes deeper than the surface. It's hard to define."

**Personality Not Mere Charm.** "Maybe they want charm," you suggest hopefully, because you've heard that word used interchangeably with personality. But apparently that's not the answer, for the interviewer fairly bristles as she says: "I should say not! If there is one thing business doesn't want it is employees exuding charm all over the place. They have enough troubles without that."

**Employers Want Appearance Plus.** Let's say then, that in prospective employees business is looking for personality factors, which are appearance *plus* something else. The story of Jane Doane illustrates my point.

Jane had just completed a commercial course in high school when her family moved to another city. This made Jane doubly timid about looking for work, since she could now have no help from her school and she knew no one in the city to which her family had moved. However, Jane's uncle wrote from New York to some business friends of his, and through them Jane was introduced to a good employment agency. In this way something of Jane's background became known and she was sent to be interviewed by one of the agency's most exacting clients.

Jane made a good impression on the personnel director, which won her an interview with the vice-president, who passed on everybody. Jane's good grooming and good manners, plus what he had been told about her, counted greatly in her favor. But she looked very young, the executive told her. "I come from a

young-looking family," said Jane, which showed she was "quick on the uptake."

"If I give you this job, do you think you could dress so you appear older?" the vice-president wanted to know before he committed himself. "I don't want them to think I'm hiring babies around here. Have you any black clothes?"

Jane said she hadn't, but she would be glad to get some. The executive then suggested that Jane and her mother meet their personnel director downtown next day and select suitable office clothes for Jane—not at the firm's expense I regret to say. And so our little Jane got her first lesson in what to wear for business. With the aid of her mother and the personnel director, she was outfitted in two neat blue dresses. The next time she goes to look for a job—which will not be soon, I'm told—Jane will know better than to wear a schoolgirl's sweater and skirt. Her clothes almost lost her that job, Jane says. But her personality got it for her, for Jane was the twenty-fifth girl to be interviewed.

Last summer on the Pacific Coast I heard of another instance in which a young woman got a job solely through her personality. The practically indispensable secretary to a bank president was retiring, and the bank was on a spot. The work was easy, and any of the other stenographers in the bank could have done it. But none of them quite met the personality requirements. Those secretaries who sit outside a bank president's private office are part of the window dressing. They must look attractive, be gracious in their manners and exceedingly tactful in meeting callers. But this is not all. They must be highly intelligent and equal to handling any situation that may arise at their strategic outpost.

The president and several directors interviewed a dozen applicants without success. Just as they despaired of getting the type they wanted, somebody said he knew somebody who knew Margery Kenny. So Margery Kenny was called in from her minor job on a small magazine. When Margery entered the room and spoke, both the president and a director who was present knew she had the poise and the brains they were looking

for. They felt sure she could handle visitors and grace the outer office besides. So personality helped Margery to skip several rungs of her experience ladder.

**Appearance Can Be Deceptive.** Sometimes an employer puts so much stress on personality that he overlooks some other things for which personality is not a substitute. Ability, for instance. An amusing story is told of a Midwestern businessman who turned down twenty stenographic applicants and employed the twenty-first because she had the personality he was visualizing. But after a few days her inefficiency was too much for him. "That girl can't read her notes and she can't spell," he complained to the employment agency. "She's got my work all balled up. What do you mean sending me anybody so dumb?"

But the employment agent who had filled his order was not to be browbeaten. "See here," she said. "The first person I send out is always the best one I have right then to fill the specifications. If she, or one or two others, isn't acceptable, I know an employer is looking for a certain type of personality. All I can do then is to keep on sending applicants, hoping to hit on the type he has in mind. The first one I sent you was my choice; the twenty-first was yours. Don't blame me!"

**Personality Not Prettiness.** That employers are wary of the too beauty-conscious applicant is indicated by a story an employer told me. He was looking for a young woman with an attractive personality to fill a stenographic vacancy. In Amy Rogers he thought he had found her. He was just about to say, "All right, Miss Rogers, we'll consider the position yours," when Amy wrecked her chances. All she did was raise her hand and daintily stroke a well-arched eyebrow. But the employer had had plenty of experience with girls who made up at their desks or spent an ungodly amount of time in the dressing room fixing up their faces. "Right then, I decided less beauty and more work was what I wanted," he told me. "Personality isn't prettiness anyway. Sometimes a young woman who is positively plain has an exceptionally attractive personality." I agreed with him. Very often a plain girl can and does compensate for her



lack of beauty by enriching her personality and making her clothes and grooming work for her.

**Social Graces Not Wanted.** And if beauty is not personality, neither are charm and social graces. At least they are not considered so in business. Frances Maule in an article written for *The Independent Woman*<sup>1</sup> has this to say:

An office is no place for the exercise of witching charm or the display of social graces. A woman who is used to gathering bouquets as the life of the party is likely to find herself receiving brickbats if she starts trying to be the life of the office.

If it ever was true—and it probably never was, except in the most limited way—that a woman could “get by” in a modern office on charm, that time ended when the depression set every organization checking up on overhead. A woman holds her job and gets ahead in exact ratio to her ability to make a fair return in efficient work for what she is paid.

#### THE MASCULINE PERSONALITY BUSINESS WANTS

**“Clean-cut” the Requirement.** Along with the rather wide search for male stenographers and secretaries, of which I spoke in an earlier chapter, go very definite personality requirements. “Clean-cut” is one of the descriptive adjectives most used, I am told by employment agencies. Yet none of them knows just what this nice-sounding hyphenated adjective means. I take it that the expression is used to define faultless grooming as well as correct dress, and yet I am sure its implications do not stop there. Business is certainly not looking for Beau Brummells. It wants that clean-cut young man to be something of the collegiate type at its best in dress and grooming. It wants him to be alert and interested in everything about him and in no wise blasé. It would appreciate a grain of humility and an ounce of deference in his attitude. In an interview, the young male applicant is being sized up right then as a possible future executive, and his personality must stand up under this appraisal.

<sup>1</sup> MAULE, FRANCES, Women Are So Personal, *The Independent Woman*, September, 1934.

**Appearance Plays Its Part.** A young friend of mine who has done considerable selling tells me he was once singled out from a long line of applicants waiting to be interviewed for holiday work in a metropolitan department store. He heard those ahead of him being told, "We're not taking anybody on. Sorry." So his hopes were low indeed. Judge his surprise when someone tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Come this way." He was ushered into an adjoining office, and even though he was inexperienced, he was hired to sell in the men's furnishings department. They told him he had the right personality for that work. He thought he had been singled out because he was especially well dressed and well groomed on that occasion. But no doubt less tangible qualities of gentlemanliness also spoke through his appearance.

A year or so later, when this young man was selling building materials, his sales manager told him he was dressed too well for the job. "You mustn't attract attention by your clothes," the sales executive said. "You'll do better to look like everyone else—about as ordinary as the men you are calling on. Let your personality shine in the sale itself—when it comes to your handling of your sales arguments—rather than in your appearance." These stories suggest that there is no set success pattern in personality.

### GLAMOROUS PERSONALITY—NOT FOR BUSINESS

Some years ago, when the Duke of Windsor was still the Prince of Wales, the British Government sent him to America to increase the friendship between the two countries. Just about the same time the late Queen Marie of Roumania came to America to raise funds for her needy people. These two royal persons were considered to be the most glamorous personalities of the times and as such would prove powerful "salesmen" for their respective countries. Once when I was speaking before a group of salespeople in a Pittsburgh department store, on *The Selling Personality*, I was asked by the management to cite Edward and Marie as ideals for employees to emulate. But I refused on the

ground that such spectacular personalities—even if they could be found and reproduced in quantity—would make shoppers most uncomfortable. This request was exceptional. The truth is that business is not looking for the regally glamorous personalities to perform the unglamorous duties of stenographers and mailing clerks.

Not even in employees who meet the public—at reception desks, information booths, and at counters that divide many offices from customers and salesmen who call—does business demand spectacular personalities. This group of employees is expected to be agreeable, intelligent, and resourceful—and all in their best manner. But even in these positions business does not want overdressing or any other overemphasis that attracts attention to itself.

#### A DEFINITION OF PERSONALITY

So far, I have avoided giving you any definitions of personality. But I think the illustrations cited make it clear that, for our purposes, we can consider personality to be the physical and mental make-up that distinguishes one person from another. The words “personality” and “individuality” are often used interchangeably, and I believe it will simplify our discussion if we so regard them. But let us be very sure we understand what is meant. Again quoting Frances Maule, let us remember that personality is not “unbridled individuality running riot all over the place. In business, personality means control—and above all the ability to keep those aspects of your personality that have no relation to your work strictly tucked away during office hours.”

**The Basis of Individuality.** Individuality—that which makes each of us unique—is God-given. Part of the great mystery of all nature is that there are no duplicates. In his factories man turns out hundreds, thousands, and even millions of duplicates. But not so in the great Universe. No two leaves are just alike. If you doubt it, try to find twin leaves. And no two snowflakes are just alike. You will discover under a microscope that, among the myriad beautiful geometric designs of snowflakes, each is

utterly different from its companion. And so it is with people. Even identical twins, more nearly alike than any other persons, have different characteristics. You never confuse twins when you know them well. When they are not brought up together, their differences are even more noticeable.

### BE YOUR INDIVIDUAL SELF

So, when you are considering how to improve your personality for business, the first and most important thing I urge upon you is "be your individual self." Surrounded as you are by mass education, reading, and entertainment—not to mention the school-day phobia of "everybody's doing it"—the tendency is to flatten out into a standardized pattern. Fight this for all you are worth. Dig deep into that self which is uniquely yours; try to understand it better, and then undertake the needed improvements so that this "you" will be increasingly admirable from within and without.

**Enrich Your Personality.** This does not mean that you will not receive inspiration, help, and ideas from others. Far from it. If you are keenly alive to making the most of yourself you will be always on the lookout for ideas that you can adapt and use. But, by the time you have modified such ideas to your own needs, they will have become your own.

**Imitation Not Profitable.** Many books and articles on personality development recommend picking out an ideal and then imitating him or her. Perhaps this explains the swarms of synthetic Robert Taylors and Greta Garbos. There is nothing new in this tendency to imitate movie stars. I lived in Hollywood during the days when Mary Pickford was affectionately known as "America's sweetheart." Both Los Angeles and Hollywood were filled with imitation Marys from all over the country. Some of them, with their corkscrew curls, managed to look almost like their pattern, but I never heard that it got them into the movies or anywhere else. I have known Olivia de Havilland and her sister Joan Fontaine since they were little girls. Their

mother is my friend. Let me assure you that neither of these girls has ever imitated anyone. Their opportunities for success came largely because they were distinctly individual. Daring to be more and more themselves is an ever-expanding creed with each of them.

**Regimentation Reacts against Applicants.** Here is a story that illustrates how imitation can work against you when you are looking for a job. It was told me by an interviewer in a State Employment Service office in Connecticut. The time was June, and the waiting room was filled each morning with recently graduated high-school girls applying for office work. "I can't tell them apart," the interviewer waived to me. "They are all dressed just alike; they wear their hair the same way, and they all chew gum with identical gusto. I register them and do the best I can for them, but the truth is not one of them makes the slightest impression on me. The next morning I look out and apparently the same young women are waiting again. But no! I ask their names and find these are not yesterday's applicants, but more just like them."

These New England girls, like students all over the country, were either following the latest school fad in dress or imitating the most popular girl in their class. Whichever it was, they had lost their precious individuality. Although not permanently serious, since they would later snap out of it, the regimentation was temporarily serious. For if they had no individuality with which to interest an employment agency, it is certain they would make no better impression upon an employer who interviewed them.

**Discover Your Real Self.** There is everything to be said against acquiring personality by imitation and nothing to be said for it, in my observation. At best, the imitation can be only skin deep. Even then, the mask acquired seldom goes with anything else the copycat possesses—voice, way of living, occupation, or what not. The timid lad who tries to copy the back-slapping salesman whom he so admires is not likely to be a success in the role. Yet if he would stick to his own type and individual-

ity and bring out the best in them, he might well become outstanding in his own right.

But when I say, "Be yourself. Be unique," I do not mean to suggest that you be arty or Bohemian. There is a great difference between emphasizing your individual personality and encrusting it with affectations. Perhaps I should say, "Find yourself." For when you discover that best self which is fundamentally you and are satisfied increasingly to express it, calmly and quietly, you will have a personality that will be recognized as genuinely fine. Let me warn you, you have a lifework ahead of you. But in the doing, you will find life interesting and worth while.

#### PERSONALITY CAN BE IMPROVED

**Schools Can Only Point the Way.** Fortunately for us all, personality can be improved. Many private business schools, commercial high schools, and junior colleges have inaugurated courses in personal development in order to help students adjust themselves to business requirements. These courses sometimes stress character development and often do much to aid students in analyzing themselves objectively. Also, such courses afford teachers an opportunity to suggest the changing of habits—something not easily accomplished in group study. Naturally, where an understanding teacher, or a counselor, is available for private conferences, she can make suggestions or give constructive criticisms which may be the means of correcting attitudes and peculiarities that could prove fatal in business. Of course, all the lecture courses and counseling in Christendom are so much wasted effort unless the individual recognizes the need for developing desirable character traits. The real work lies entirely with him. But is there anyone who can truthfully say he is so perfect he needs no improvement?

**Acquire an Outgoing Personality.** Dr. Henry C. Link in an article in *The Reader's Digest*<sup>1</sup> says, "The development of per-

<sup>1</sup> LINK, HENRY C., A Workable Cue to Happiness and Personality, *The Reader's Digest*, June, 1937.

sonality depends upon learning to do an increasing number of things for and with people." Dr. Link is associated with the Psychological Corporation of New York, the organization responsible for the P.Q., or Personality Quotient, now being used by psychologists to test the elements of an individual's personality. The P.Q. corresponds to the I.Q., or Intelligence Quotient, used in educational circles as a measurement of intelligence. In a recent survey of 4,000 high-school students it was found that athletes almost always rated tops in personality, while students with high scholastic standing might or might not make high P.Q. ratings. In other words, those who excelled in sports usually had the qualities that make for popularity. They were good mixers. The same tests showed that girls and boys who had spent two or more summers in camp were practically certain to have high P.Q.'s, whereas one summer in camp failed to register. Such findings seem to prove Dr. Link's point that doing things for and with people tends to improve the individual's personality. For many, community activities in camp, learning to play bridge, or joining a tennis club are much easier methods of self-improvement than plugging away at character traits. Some of both kinds of discipline would probably be the ideal system. Gains made in either would help with one's business personality as well as with one's "after-hours" self. In other words, personality must grow outward.

#### WHAT THE EMPLOYER SEEKS IN PERSONALITY

On the basis of the foregoing definitions of personality as applied to business, it seems to me that the average employer has done a very good job of arriving at a sum total of this thing called personality. Observation of the adjustment employees make or fail to make has caused him to require for admission to his office force practically all the characteristics we have defined as desirable personality traits.

Suppose we check them off once more. *Appearance*—about which I have said so much—looms large as a personality factor in business. And everyone can improve his or her appearance.

*Character* is watched for in interviews, and your character is judged by what you say and even more by whether or not it shines through your face and manner. For the employer knows that where there is visible character there is apt to be honesty, industry, and loyalty. *Individuality* that is restrained by common sense is desired by the kind of employer for whom you would like to work. *Emotional stability* and *balance* are rated high by this employer, though he may not use these words. He will say he wants only those on his pay roll who can get along with others. Whether you are a good mixer after hours does not concern him. But during business hours he wishes you to have those outgoing qualities that enable you to adjust to those above and below you, as well as to your equals. The employer may be inarticulate in stating the personality requirements for the jobs he lists with employment agencies, but he knows what he is looking for and is adept in recognizing these qualities when he talks with applicants.

#### PERSONALITY FROM NINE TO FIVE

There seems to be a more generally accepted personality pattern for holding a job than for getting one. Here it is: *During business hours most employers wish their employees to be dignified and formal, without sacrificing naturalness; pleasantly impersonal and unobtrusive, without being negative. Also, they expect unfailing courtesy, alertness, and order.*

**No Loss of Individuality.** It may seem to you that there would be a total lack of individuality in a large group of employees, if all of them achieved the ideal personality I have just outlined. I assure you this is not the case. That unique gift of individuality everyone possesses makes each person's interpretation of a business personality distinctly his own. Business does not want human rubber stamps, any more than it wants prima donnas or screen heroes.

**Personality Adjustments in Business.** But let's take a close-up of personality on the job. Here personality is on trial. Can the individual conform? He may have the personality requirements for getting a job and yet lack the ability to adjust



himself to the conditions or the personalities with which he now comes in contact. Sometimes a new evaluation of his own personality is necessary in terms of the requirements of his position. And sometimes a quick rightabout-face is imperative. This is especially true of experienced workers, who often find each job necessitates a certain amount of personality adjustment.

To illustrate: A man may have worked for a very formal type of organization where the personality requirements were similar to those I have described. He found he could adjust himself without much difficulty to this standard. Then a change of job puts him into a rough-and-ready firm which likes everyone to be "Hail fellow well met." Regardless of whether this standard is akin to his real self, he has to conform. If he is not able to do so, the whisper soon starts: "He won't last long. He doesn't fit in here."

Many young women have come to me asking what to do when they found themselves in such a situation. They say their employers consider them too formal. I assure them that formality is the rule and that they have met the exception that proves it. However, under those circumstances, all they can do is adjust themselves as best they can. Then, if the established informality is too uncongenial, they can keep their eyes open for other jobs.

**Those Who Find Selves Conform Best.** How readily you are able to fall in with the personality requirements of business may depend largely upon the degree to which you have "found" yourself. Those poised individuals who understand themselves and their place in the scheme of things usually make the required adaptation with little apparent difficulty. Although, for them, acting the part business requires of them may be just that, they are sufficiently well balanced to fit into the business machine without being crushed in the process.

**A Feeling of Inferiority.** But on every hand we see employees who cannot seem to take these necessary personality adjustments in their stride. Often everybody around them knows what is wrong while they continue unaware of their maladjustment.

Let me mention a few obstructing personality traits that mark the nonconformers. First there is that old bugaboo, the feeling of inferiority. This may make its possessor too timid, shy, or fearful to function adequately in the ranks of business.

Take Beatrice Bowen, an able assistant bookkeeper, as an example. Beatrice had such a poor opinion of herself that she quaked internally with timidity. She positively suffered when her duties necessitated her working closely with other people in the office. Beatrice meant to meet everybody halfway and hold up her end, and she thought she was doing it. But no one could read her mind, and her stand-offishness caused her to be thought uncooperative. For a time, Beatrice's feeling of inferiority reacted decidedly against her and prevented her advancement. But, like the heroines in the magazine advertisements, she overheard a remark that tipped her off to what was the matter. There was nothing wrong with Beatrice's intelligence, and, when she realized that she must do something to overcome the discomfort she felt with other people, she got busy. A course in public speaking, followed by joining a club where she had to express herself now and then, corrected the trouble. Now Beatrice is a well-adjusted girl with a most acceptable business personality.

But sometimes a feeling of inferiority acts in just the opposite way. I have seen it produce strutters and boasters in business, especially in men of small stature who, because they were in positions of authority, could bully men they could not combat physically. In the lower salary brackets, this trait sometimes manifests itself as in the case of Muriel Johnstone. Muriel is a good-looking, neatly dressed office girl, who talks all the time. Her chatter drives those about her nearly crazy. Frequent pleas to "Pipe down" do no good. Muriel is not aware of it, but she talks to cover up a sense of inferiority. She is nervous and self-conscious when the room is quiet. Muriel hasn't learned to live with herself and her own thoughts, either at home or at work. She hasn't found herself; therefore, she doesn't know how to conform. In consequence, she has not inspired

those over her to promote her into more responsible work. So Muriel remains an office girl.

**False Superiority Hinders Progress.** Another unfortunate personality trait is manifested by the person who thinks he is too good to associate with his office mates. Sometimes this superior attitude is due to a difference in social position or to his having a better education than others of the staff or even of the management. Again, the fault may be found in the man or woman who has held a better position and feels the present job a step down. You will remember the conceited child in school always had it taken out of him by other children. And the same is true of a superiority complex when it enters business. If for any reason you feel superior, get busy and overcome this trait, which will get you nowhere and may cause you much unhappiness. Certainly, it is ten times harder for a snob to advance than it is for a sincere, steady worker who mixes with kindness and appreciation among his fellow workers.

**Bad Dispositions Are a Drawback.** Bad dispositions loom large among personality traits that often hold back able persons. The office worker who loses his temper is considered a liability in business. His office-hours personality is poor because he cannot be counted upon to be agreeable and self-controlled. Since he cannot manage himself emotionally, those above him are not inclined to promote him, for they doubt his ability to handle others. Although an occasional brilliant hothead reaches a top position, the business woods are full of men and women who have blocked their own futures because they have antagonized everyone above, around, and below them. Business makes short work of those who indulge their tempers or their temperaments. If it does not dismiss them, it is likely to give them a life sentence at the rock pile of insignificant detail.

**Negative Personality Hampers Owner.** Sometimes the personality defect is nothing so definite as a bad temper. Young people for whom the business world seems just too, too dull are dead weight in an office. And, alas, there are enough of them for employers to classify them as an undesirable type. The young

woman who never smiles and has no interest in the beehive activities around her, even though she does her work well, is given a low P.Q. rating. The young man who goes through the motions of his job in a shuffling, listless manner isn't worth a salary, even if he is only running the envelope sealer. These young people are so negative, they are just zeros; yet nobody who has intelligence enough to land a place for himself in business need be a personality cipher.

There is the story of Henrietta Holden. Even her "Good morning" was so grave, it amounted to a rebuke that descended on employer and fellow worker alike. She carried out orders with a fidelity that was priceless but with a disinterest that was infuriating. The Christmas bonus that made the office delirious with joy put no sparkle in her eye or gladness in her voice. Her boss broke his arm and carried it in a sling for six weeks; his son carried the ball sixty yards to a touchdown; the water system burst and flooded the files; the wife of the youngest executive presented him with an heir; and the firm landed a million dollar contract. All these things required direct action from Henrietta, and her brain and hands were busy with their details, but she might have been an automaton for all the outward interest she manifested. When she was threatened with the loss of her job because she was so "wooden" Henrietta came to life with an astonished protest, begged for a second chance, and got it. Now her good deed for the day is showing interest in someone or something, in making her voice warm and cordial, in praising the efficiency of the new air-cooling system, in consoling the boss on his poor golf score or the greenest typist for the slowness of her first week's work. In other words, Henrietta is transforming herself into an interested and interesting human being.

**Positive Personality Wins.** As opposed to the negative, we find the positive personality, which often sweeps everything before it. For example, there was Eddie, an elevator boy with a high-school education and no particular training; but his agreeable, efficient manner of handling himself, his passengers, and the other employees had brought him to the attention of the

store executives. He conformed and fitted in, or he would not have been the subject of such favorable comment as this:

"That Eddie's quite a boy."

"Yes, he has a lot of personality. Everybody likes him."

"He's very sure of himself."

"But he's not cocky."

"Too bad to keep him on a dead-end job."

"Don't worry, Eddie can't be sidetracked. Besides, I hear there are plans for him."

"Is that so? I'm glad. He's a good kid."

The upshot of all this was that the superintendent who did the employing had a talk with Eddie about his future.

"It has been suggested you have the personality for selling," the superintendent said. "Would you like to try it?"

But Eddie, being a positive person, had his own ideas. He wanted to go into office work. So, while he continued saying "Third floor," and "Going up," for seven or eight months longer, Eddie studied business subjects at night. As soon as he had mastered typing and gained some knowledge of bookkeeping, Eddie was promoted into the store's office as a general clerk. It was Eddie's likable, well-rounded personality that got him his chance. Although the war interrupted his progress at that point, Eddie has returned to his old job and is expected to go on up into executive work in the accounting end of the business.

#### **A GOOD BUSINESS PERSONALITY CAN BE YOURS**

**Build through Conscious Effort.** You can attain a desirable business personality partly by conscious effort. The suggestions offered in this chapter will give you a basis on which to begin. Also, you can gain through observing those about you. Watch how they adjust to the general standard, and profit by their triumphs and failures.

**Good Habits and Attitudes Help Unconsciously.** Much of your success in achieving a satisfactory business personality will come about unconsciously. As you work to establish the right attitudes and habits of businesslike conduct, your personality will develop, too. For when your attitudes and habits on the

job are good they result in just the type of personality that business wants. You need not fear this personality will be an affectation, any more than curbing your temper or closing your ears to gossip will be.

**Office "You" Part of Dual Personality.** As you grow with your job, you will find that your office personality becomes *you* from nine o'clock to five. Eventually, it will be as much a part of you as your office clothes and just as easy to get into at the proper time. Or you may come to enjoy having a dual personality and to like the business "you" so much that you will voluntarily seek to explore its possibilities further. But be assured that whether or not the real you likes that other "you" the effort you make to train it in the way it should go will, paradoxically, enrich the personality you think of as your true self. Then you'll be a well-integrated pair.

#### A WORKING DEFINITION OF PERSONALITY

And now a word about that *whole* personality. John Dewey, the dean of American philosophers, is said to have defined personality as "the sum total of tendencies to respond." Think this definition through. You will discover that those who respond to no stimuli are the negative personalities. They lack interests. Those who respond to undesirable stimuli become twisted in their values, and their lives are wasted and unproductive of good. The worst of these become criminals.

In contrast, think of the most interesting person you know. You will readily recognize in him a wide range of response. He responds to the stimulus of beauty everywhere—in nature, in art and literature, in friendship and family life. His horizon is broadened by the stimulus of travel, and his acute social consciousness causes him to respond to the best in everyone he meets. His interests are ever expanding because his "tendencies to respond" know no limit.

You can do no better than to adopt as your own this working rule for developing personality. Every small gain you make in widening your responses will enrich your life and extend your sphere of usefulness, in business and elsewhere. You will

attract others to you because you will have in greater or less degree that major gift of a fine personality—the ability to make those in your presence feel strong and refreshed.

### QUESTIONS

1. Other things being equal, why is personality often the deciding factor in employment interviews?

2. Why is it important that you begin taking an inventory of your personality assets before you leave school?

3. What do you think is meant by a "telephone personality"?

4. Is charm the same thing as personality?

5. Can personality take the place of real ability?

6. Why would personality be thought so important in selecting a secretary for a bank president? Would it be as important in choosing a clerical worker?

7. Do employers consider beauty an indispensable part of an attractive personality in women employees?

8. Is the prima donna or the movie hero type of personality what business is looking for?

9. Is there a set personality pattern for men in business? For women?

10. Do employers encourage employees in a display of individuality during business hours?

11. Can personality be changed overnight? Can someone else develop your personality for you by telling you what needs to be done?

12. When a person has acquired an acceptable business personality, can he go through his entire working life without making further adjustments?

13. Can one improve his business personality by watching those about him? Will he learn as much from observing the failures as from the successes? If so, why? If not, why not?

14. When employers seek an attractive personality, is it good looks they want?

15. To have a "clean-cut" personality must a young man look like an Arrow collar advertisement?

16. Is surface personality a reliable indication of real ability?

17. Does business want spectacular personalities?

18. Is it true that employers are primarily interested in securing socially charming young women to grace their offices?

19. To develop your personality, is it advisable to pick a favorite movie star and stage a good imitation?

20. Is a P.Q. the same thing as an I.Q.?

21. Is it true that, in business, personality adjustments are necessary to meet changing conditions?

22. Can a person who expresses complete indifference to everything have a good business personality?

23. Is a positive personality necessarily an aggressive one?

24. Should your business personality be the same as your "after-hours" personality?

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Explain what you think is meant by a "pleasing" personality in women; a "clean-cut" personality in men.

2. Discuss what is meant by a personality that fits the job. Is the same type of personality needed in a receptionist as in a file clerk? In a salesman, as in an accountant?

Discuss the different personality qualifications of these four occupations mentioned above.

3. Business wants employees who can

a. Get along with others.

b. Control their emotions.

c. Demonstrate such qualities as agreeableness, industriousness, leadership, resourcefulness, and a capacity for teamwork.

Discuss whether all these qualifications can be considered personality traits. Also, to what degree they can be cultivated.

4. Do you think the words "personality" and "individuality" can be used interchangeably?

5. Discuss personality from the point of view that it consists largely of

a. Appearance

b. Character traits

c. Good habits

d. Emotional stability and balance

e. The ability to interest and influence others

6. To cultivate a desirable personality, should you

a. Read self-help books?

b. Think more of other people's wishes and comfort?



- c. Take a course in personal development?
- d. Work constantly at improving your character traits?
- e. Try to replace bad habits with good ones?
- f. Learn to be better dressed and groomed?

If you think a combination of these procedures would be better than any one, state which combination you think would be most effective, and why.

7. Suppose you were timid and felt that you should overcome this stumbling block. How would you go about it?

If your chief personality problem were a bad temper, how would you try to overcome it?

8. If self-analysis reveals that your personality is negative, what can you do to become a more positive person?

If you have either an inferiority or a superiority complex, what can you do to get rid of this handicap?

9. A leading dramatic teacher has said that vitality and courage are among the most important ingredients of a fine personality. She adds that any aspirant for stage or screen success must have perseverance and energy far above the average.

Do you think these qualities are needed to the same extent by business beginners? Discuss how vitality and courage would be helpful in getting a job; in making good on it. If these qualities are lacking, how can they be acquired?

10. Consider the definition of business personality as given on page 397. If all in an office are successful in expressing this personality pattern from nine to five, will they lose their individuality?

11. Why do you think Frances Maule, as quoted in the text, says, "In business, personality means control"? Does she mean self-control or the control employers exert over those who work for them?

12. Discuss what is meant by a "dual personality" as the term is used in this chapter. Does one personality contribute to the other, or hinder the other?

## PROJECTS

### A SELF-TEST OF PERSONALITY TRAITS

1. So that you may make a preliminary estimate of qualities certain to be important in your business life, here is a scale by which you can rate yourself. These are personality traits stressed by employers. If you have not yet been employed, you can base your self-judgment

only upon how you have stacked up in school and home life when these characteristics have been in evidence.

Consider 5 as high and 3 as average. Grade yourself as fairly and honestly as you can.

Traits	Rank in relation to other adults				
	5	4	3	2	1
	80-100 %	60-80 %	40-60 %	20-40 %	0-20 %
Am I—sincere					
enthusiastic					
interested					
tactful					
alert ..					
cheerful					
friendly					
loyal					
sympathetic					
patient					
honest					
impersonal					
pleasing					
Have I—initiative					
a sense of humor					
charity					
understanding					
an agreeable disposition					

This type of analysis can be carried further by adding other qualities equally pertinent to success in office work.

2 Write a 500-word paper on the following topic: It is his goal in life that molds a man's personality.

3. Someone has said that the raw material out of which personality can be refined is

- a. Respect for your task
- b. Respect for your boss
- c. Respect for your fellow worker
- d. Respect for yourself

Write a paper discussing what the cultivation of respect in these four situations would do to develop the personality of a colorless individual.

## CHAPTER XVI

### SELF-ORGANIZATION FOR SUCCESS

If you have made use of the suggestions given in the previous chapters, you are well forward in your approach to business. Mentally, if not actually, you have made a plan for your business life and plotted a course toward a job. You have also learned something about how to organize yourself on a job and how to plan a wardrobe for a job. And you have been given a slant on budgeting. There is one more important step to take—the organization of your personal life, apart from your business life. For no matter how well planned the steps toward your business objectives, if your personal affairs are without organization, you may find success eluding you.

"Goodness, will I have to live a job twenty-four hours a day?" you gasp. Certainly not. But what you do with the remaining sixteen has a tremendous bearing on the success of your eight working hours.

#### HOW EMPLOYERS JUDGE BEGINNERS

You will remember that I told you in the chapter on interviewing that a prospective employer would ask you questions about your outside living. These questions are not an impertinence. By your answer an employer can often judge whether you are a "playboy" or a young woman who lives only for dates; whether your health is sound or whether you will be likely to require frequent time out. These last two conditions are especially important. Many business organizations now require that all incoming employees pass a physical examination. One Midwestern industrial organization asks on its application blank, "Do you object to taking a physical examination annually?" All the office as well as the factory employees of this company undergo a physical

examination once a year. If they fail to pass it satisfactorily, they do not remain on the pay roll, unless the condition found is easily remedied.

### **SELF-ORGANIZATION COULD SALVAGE MANY FAILURES**

Whatever preliminary checkup business makes regarding your health or your personal life is the result of costly experience. It has struggled too often with the casual, the indifferent, the lazy, the uncooperative, the rolling stone, the opportunist, and their ilk. Conversely, it has appraised the worth of the willing, the industrious, the conscientious, the loyal, and the dependable. Often the difference between these two groups is only a matter of the way they live. Probably there are many who might never have become classified in the first group if they had been given a little light on self-organization.

### **EIGHT HOURS' SLEEP FOR WORKERS**

Once you have entered business, if you mean to stay you can't burn the candle at both ends. There just isn't anyone who is physically able to keep late hours every night and be wide awake on the job at eight or nine the next morning. You may be able to keep it up for a while and get away with it. But sooner or later you will begin to show the strain. Nervousness, listlessness, and yawns and nods over your work will creep up on you unawares. But more damaging still to your success are the errors that will crop up in your work because you are not "all there." These are dead give-aways that you need more sleep.

Eight hours' sleep should be the minimum for everyone who works. A little fun during the week is good relaxation, but eleven o'clock should be the dead line for bedtime. If you confine your late dates to Saturday nights, you will feel so fit that getting up on workdays won't be hard at all.

### **MARATHON DRESSERS OFTEN LOSE OUT**

And don't sleep in the morning until you have time only to throw on your clothes, gulp some coffee, and dash for the office. Your whole day will go better if you allow time to bathe, dress,

breakfast, and make your transportation connections without hurry. A good way to get completely off your base for the whole day is to arrive at the office breathless, flushed, and full of apologies.

Believe me, I am quite serious when I say those marathon dressers who clock their speed aren't nearly so smart as they think. Not long ago a Chicago department-store buyer told me how such a practice sometimes works out. "Promotions usually come unexpectedly," she said. "Somebody drops out of the department and without warning I am asked to recommend a young woman to fill the position. Naturally, I suggest someone whose work merits the advance. Invariably I'm told, 'Send her up. We want to take a look at her.' Then, woe betide the woman if she got up too late that morning to dress her hair properly, or if she was out so late the night before she neglected to put a fresh collar and fresh cuffs on her dress. Nothing I can say about her work will act as a smoke screen for her untidy appearance, and a better groomed applicant gets the promotion." I have seen much the same thing happen in offices.

Those able men and women who do the hiring and firing in business know better than anyone else what a good plan it is to save your health in your twenties because you'll need it in your thirties. A seasoned personnel director would see at a glance that many of the reasons for dismissal and failure to be promoted, reported in the study *Why They Couldn't Hold Their Jobs*,<sup>1</sup> were the result of lack of self-organization. Carelessness, tardiness, and absence for causes other than illness are often due to insufficient sleep. Lack of ambition and lack of initiative can easily follow one's not feeling up to par. Actually, although a few of us become unfit for work because of definite illness, more of us unfit ourselves by unwise living.

#### FUEL FOR YOUR ENGINE

In self-organization for success, another simple rule of life is three square meals a day—well-balanced meals, eaten at regular

<sup>1</sup> See p. 253.

times. The young woman who lunches regularly on a "coke" cannot keep up with her ambitions for herself or the demands of her job. The young man who stays in bed until he has only time for a cup of coffee has no fuel to keep him going until lunch, and his work inevitably suffers. That same boy would never dream of starting out in his car without making sure he had gas in the tank.

In some instances inadequate food or the wrong kind of food is due to ignorance of what the human engine requires. At a commercial high school in Brooklyn the matter was made a subject for class study. A problem was presented such as this: "If you were a stenographer and had twenty cents to spend on lunch, what would you buy?" The answers included everything from two bars of chocolate to ravioli. "All right," said the teacher, "take your lunch money to the cafeteria today and buy just that and see if it will keep you going until five o'clock." At the same time she emphasized the high food content and the low cost of the lettuce sandwiches made with mayonnaise, offered in the cafeteria. For a few days, eighty lettuce sandwiches went begging among 9,000 students, but soon a large kitchen staff was kept busy stuffing lettuce into buns to meet the demand for this type of lunch, plus milk and a wholesome dessert. You will find that most lunch counters and other inexpensive lunch and dinner places make a point of specializing each day in a well-balanced combination of food which will be both satisfying and cheap. So don't think lettuce sandwiches (which you may not like) are the only answer. I only suggest you find the right answer for yourself. Sensible eating will pay big dividends in health, happiness, and efficiency.

#### THE SAD STORY OF DAVID GRIER

To show you what unorganized eating habits can do to you and your future, let me tell you the story of David Grier. David was a fine lad who had no idea what trouble he was piling up for himself. On leaving college David got a beginner's job with excellent prospects for advancement. Although he had had no

specific training, his personality and general education inspired a good firm to start him in clerical work, headed for executive work. David was away from home, and after a few trials he labeled boarding houses as "too gossipy." So he moved to a delightful studio room overlooking a garden, where he could be alone. This knocked his living budget into a cocked hat, for the room cost \$25 a month and David was earning only \$18 a week. However, he laughed off this extravagance by planning to cook his own meals.

Now David was six feet tall and required plenty of intake. What he knew about cooking could be put into a thimble. But, with the daring of the uninitiated, he started out. The house where David had his studio possessed a community kitchen. It was the custom for the first tenant up in the morning to make coffee and toast for the rest of them. "Swell," thought David. "One meal to the good." And he didn't bother to add eggs or cereal to this meager starter. His lunch was equally poor, since the only eating place near his work was an Italian restaurant where the fare did not agree with him. At night his chances for proper food were still slim, because the married couples pre-empted the community kitchen until nearly nine o'clock. So poor David's meals grew more and more inadequate and irregular.

But that was not all. David was a confirmed "stayer-upper." In the house with the garden there were a number of intellectual radicals with whom David found it excitingly interesting to talk. And talk they did, night after night, until one or two o'clock seemed normal bedtime.

As David listened and aired his own views, he began to think the capitalistic system demanded too much of its cohorts. Why should anyone work from eight to five? He grew more and more dissatisfied with his job and blamed the capitalistic system. Any doctor would have told him he was not thinking straight because he needed more sleep and better food. Nothing makes for discontent quite so much as an abused body. David finally told his employers he needed a rest and would have to go to the country forthwith. They tried to persuade him to stick it out and

dangled a sound future before his eyes. But David had lost sight of his good fortune in having an opportunity to go places in business, and so he quit. His undernourished body and his overstimulated mind had rebelled, and he was not far from the truth when he said he was worn out and ill.

It was several years before David got another job with so assured a future and an equal salary. However, by the time he went into the army, David had become well organized and was on his way to success. His three years in the army built up his health, taught him discipline, and in many ways helped to correct any lurking effects of his early mistakes. David now plans his living to help, not hinder, his business progress.

#### **YOU ARE AN OFFICE EMPLOYEE FIRST**

If you are among those young women who keep house for yourself, your husband, or your dependents, be very sure that you do not allow your domestic program to condition your working hours. I once had a secretary who started her housekeeping day at five-thirty each morning. Monday she cleaned. Tuesday she washed. Wednesday she ironed. Thursday she cleaned again. Friday she cooked in anticipation of her regular custom of having Friday-night dinner guests. Saturday she got her home ready for the week end. Each morning she had done half a day's work before she began on my work, and by noon she was exhausted.

Often my housewifely secretary arrived at the office in a chignon dinner dress because she had to rush home at night to put her company dinner on the table. At noon she shopped for the parties she gave and often neglected her own lunch. Eventually her home life absorbed her time and attention to such an extent that I asked her to leave. It is this type of employee that makes business loath to employ married women, for they are by far the worst offenders in this respect.

The other side of that picture is the story of a woman executive I know who went to the very top in her firm. She was left a young widow with a little girl to support. Her first job was a minor clerical position. During the years I saw most of her, she



worked hard for advancement and finally was made an executive in a position previously filled by a man. She kept house and made her own lovely clothes and those of her little girl. When her daughter entered college, her wardrobe was as exquisite and adequate as any girl could wish, and her mother had made it all. Yet I never knew my friend to intrude her private life into her business duties. She had a sense of proportion and understood how to organize herself.

### YOU CAN'T DO WITHOUT EXERCISE

As part of your regime for successful living, you should not neglect fresh air and exercise. Tennis, swimming, and other sports over the week end are a big help in keeping you physically fit, and mentally too. Walking at least part of the way to and from work is another excellent way to keep fit. When a physician told me some years ago that I must walk 100 miles a month, or three miles a day, I laughed at him. "You seem to forget that I spend eight or nine hours a day in an office," I said. "No, I don't," he replied. "That's one reason why you will have to walk at night." I compromised by walking ten blocks to lunch and back, daily and another twenty blocks after dinner when I could. A much better idea is to start taking regular physical exercise before you are forced to do so as a means of reestablishing health. Sporadic week ends spent in active sports, or an annual vacation "cooking" in the sun, are not enough. It is daily exercise in the fresh air that counts most. Find out what forms of exercise suit you best and keep them up faithfully, if it is only ten-minute setting-up exercises every morning before an open window. But two hours a day out of doors will do more for you.

### WHERE DO YOU PUT THE EMPHASIS?

Another factor of great importance to success is emotional stability. For life consists of much more than physical habits, however good they may be. Emotional stability presupposes a well-balanced life. This means good living habits, with work

and fun in proper proportion. "Playboys" and "date girls" lack emotional stability because for them fun overbalances other things. On the other hand, young people who take their jobs and themselves too seriously are also lacking in this desirable quality for opposite reasons. When the latter is the case, the remedy can often be found in more friends and more fun. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy"—and Jill an unhappy girl.

### **WAYS TO MAKE FRIENDS**

"But what are you going to do when you are working in a strange city and have no chance to meet people outside of business?" a young woman asked me not long ago. The answer to that is to join a club. The Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., and young peoples' church organizations welcome newcomers and have brought congenial playmates to many. In most large cities there are girls' clubs where business girls can live happily and inexpensively; where normal good times with other young women are the rule, and parties to which young men are invited are the high lights. Young men away from home often find living at the Y.M.C.A. a means of making friends. There, too, they can swim daily and enjoy other recreations. In many communities there are organizations, such as hiking clubs, which anyone may ask to join and to which anyone will be admitted who can present the necessary character credentials. Such an organization is the Sierra Club in California. Under leaders, the club plans several inexpensive day trips and week-end trips each week the year round. During the summer months there is a series of longer camping trips that cover vacation periods. Many a life-long friendship and many a romance have begun under such auspices.

### **RIDE A HOBBY HORSE**

Apropos of leisure, it is fashionable nowadays, and sensible, too, to have a hobby. I told you earlier that during an employment interview you may be asked about your personal affairs,

including your hobby. Telling about something that is of special interest to you helps to put you at your ease and gives the interviewer a chance to judge whether or not you are capable of enthusiasms. For businessmen know that people who spend their leisure time in stimulating ways make the best workers.

### WHERE TO FIND YOUR HOBBY

If you have not yet adopted a hobby, there is a delightful little book called *Care and Feeding of Hobby Horses*, which you might enjoy reading. It is written by Earnest Elmo Calkins who became hobby-minded because growing deafness forced him to learn to entertain himself. You can buy this book at most bookstores. Mr. Calkins divides hobbies into four classifications:

- Doing things
- Making things
- Acquiring things
- Learning things

In addition to describing and listing literally hundreds of fascinating hobbies—some for millionaires and many more for the rest of us—Mr. Calkins tells about the hobbies of famous people. Also he gives a questionnaire by which you can determine which hobbies best suit your physical and mental make-up.

Perhaps some of you have listened to "Hobby-Lobby," the transcontinental radio program that invites people with interesting hobbies to share them over the air. If you are in quest of a hobby, you might get suggestions from this amusing show. Or you may find suggestions in the newspapers, since hobbies have become news. Finding your particular hobby can be as much fun as the hobby itself. And remember hobbies *are* for fun, for recreation. If they are not, they may become just another kind of work, and then the whole benefit and idea are lost.

Perhaps you would rather originate your own hobby. I received a letter from a young woman in Indianapolis who had thought up a unique interest. Here is what she wrote.

Every time I see the dedication page in a book . . . I wonder just why the author dedicated the book to that particular person, just what inspiration that person furnished, or just what help he or she has been in writing the book. It seemed to me that it might be interesting to get the stories behind these unobtrusive dedication pages, and I would like to delve into them and write them up for my own pleasure.

I notice in your book that it is dedicated to one Queena Leithead Klein, and I find myself wondering why. It is intriguing, a name of that sort . . . I wonder if you would be kind enough to have your secretary write me briefly the reason why you dedicated your book to Queena Leithead Klein.

Naturally, I wrote explaining why I had dedicated *Manners in Business* to my friend Queena Leithead Klein. Then I asked my hobby-riding correspondent why, if she were a secretary as I suspected, she had chosen such a sedentary hobby. Would it not be more stimulating and interesting for her to ride a hobby that would get her away from reading and composing letters? Photography, for instance, would take her out into the sunshine. In acknowledging my letter she said:

It is rather gratifying to me that you think another hobby of a more extrovertive character might be helpful. I had been thinking so, also, for though I used to tend toward the extrovert in personality, I find myself becoming more introverted, and I really don't like it. The perfect combination, I think, is to be about half and half in personality traits. I think I shall find another hobby soon, and I shall follow it along with this one. Thank you for the suggestion.

#### A HOBBY WILL DEVELOP YOU

I have recommended hobbies because they fill spare time, provide intellectual and emotional outlets, and make you a better employee. But the right kind of hobby does a great deal more. It makes a specialist of you. And any specialist who really knows his stuff is a decidedly worth-while person—someone in whom people are interested. If your hobby is a game or sport

which you engage in with others, it will make you a better mixer and extend your social life. And if you go in for an adventurous hobby like bird-banding, in the pursuit of which you climb lofty cliffs and trees and attach metal bands to the legs of eaglets, you will be written up in the magazines.

### HOBBIES SOMETIMES SHAPE VOCATIONS

Some hobbies lead not only into fascinating bypaths, but often develop into lucrative vocations. One business girl I know made a hobby of heraldry. This led her to full-time work, looking up the family trees of the pedigree-minded. Soon she was making water-color sketches of each client's coat of arms to go with his neatly typed genealogy. Eventually her heraldic work grew to such proportions that it paid her better than her stenographic job, and, almost without trying, she had an established, interesting business of her own.

I am told that the largest manufacturer of playground equipment in the United States was a broker when he began making slides and sandboxes for his two small sons. He constructed them so cleverly, with a minimum number of sharp corners to get bumped on, that soon his friends begged him to make slides for their children. And so to Big Business!

A hobby of mine which took a vocational turn was business etiquette. It grew and aroused so much interest that I gave up a good executive job in an advertising agency and set out traveling 100,000 miles, talking to present and future business girls about things nobody had ever bothered to tell them before. Even as you read, you are getting a further development of what began as the small hobby of collecting facts about a variety of tragic, funny, serious, or frivolous business situations and how to handle them.

### DON'T LET YOUR HOBBY HORSE RIDE YOU

Take care that your hobby horse doesn't run away with you! An executive in a railway company told me about one of his men secretaries whose hobby was playing in a band. Harry's mind

seemed to be much more taken up with his saxophone than with his work. And all day long the telephone rang, calling him to matters connected with that band! Finally, Harry's boss said, "It's your job or the band—make your choice." Harry trimmed down on the band, which after all wasn't feeding him.

### THAT ALL TOO FREQUENT SOPHOMORIC HANGOVER

Sometimes the self-organization needed lies in the direction of growing into man's estate. For sadly enough, the tendency toward infantilism among many young people is an insidious factor in their failure.

Recently I heard what happened to Ernest Howe on his first job. Ernest had been an excellent engineering student in college and promised well. He was ambitious and serious, working his way through college with an enthusiasm that seemed to indicate he had the makings of a fine man. Almost immediately upon graduation he got a job with a utility firm, and Ernest's friends felt he was "all set to go places."

But not so. Ernest refused to grow up. Though his work was good, his mind was still back on the campus. Most of his conversation had to do with fraternity activities and student politics. "At Weststate we did . . ." was the boring opening of most of his remarks to equals and superiors alike. For a year the executives of Ernest's company patiently put up with his adolescent chatter, sure that this "Rah Rah" stage was a passing phase. But they were overoptimistic. In his second year Ernest was sent with a senior executive on a field trip to learn about natural gas. Alas, when the trip ended, so did Ernest's career with that company! The official who had him in tow explained wearily that though he now knew all about what they did at Weststate, Ernest had learned nothing about natural gas. The army gave Ernest his next job. Pity his buddies!

### WHAT DIVIDENDS ARE YOU RECEIVING?

It may seem to you as you look forward to your working life that a good job and a steady income, with some chance for

advancement, will fulfill your fondest dreams. But many of you, after the novelty of working has worn off, will wonder at the lost glitter of those dreams. Inevitably comes a time when most of us ask ourselves, "What's it all about?" After four or five years of routine, we get fed up. "What am I getting out of life? All I do is work, go home, go to bed, get up and go to work again. A little fun now and then, but nothing exciting. What's the answer?"

The answer lies within yourself. How much you get out of life depends upon you. Boredom comes from within. And no one need ever be bored for five minutes! If you want life to turn cartwheels for you, you must widen your stage by enriching your experience. And you can do it, regardless of where you may be in your personal development. Your reward will come to you in countless ways. For one thing, living a richer life outside of your work often makes you more promotable in your work. Or an awakened outlook through study and expanded interests may lead you to see more clearly your capabilities as a worker. If this clearer vision shows you that another employer could make better use of your ability than your present one, you will have the courage to tackle selling your services elsewhere. Once out of your mental rut, you will go on preparing for a still better job or even an entirely different job whose possibilities you had never imagined until now.

#### MR. DANFORTH'S DARE

I am indebted to Mr. William Danforth, Chairman of the Board of the Ralston Purina Company of St. Louis, for permission to quote from his inspiring little book, *I Dare You*.<sup>1</sup> In it, Mr. Danforth tells how when he was a sallow, sickly boy, a teacher said to him, "I dare you to be the healthiest boy in the class." He took the dare and embarked upon a program that made him not only the healthiest boy in his class, but a man whose superb physique has enabled him to be his superlative best in many activities of adult life. Mr. Danforth's hobby is

<sup>1</sup> Privately printed.

working with young people, helping them to adopt what he calls a fourfold program—"Stand tall; think tall; smile tall; live tall." Thus Mr. Danforth passes on the dare given to him but broadened to cover all of living. I pass it on to you.

I want you to start a crusade in your life—to dare to be your best. I maintain that you are a better, more capable person than you have demonstrated so far. The only reason you are not the person you should be is that you don't dare to be. Once you dare, once you stop drifting with the crowd and face life courageously, life takes on a new significance. New forces take shape within you. New powers harness themselves for your service.

Who wants to do unimportant and uninteresting things? Who even wants to gratify an ambition that has grown into a passion for fame and fortune? To desire something permanent in life, to develop your gifts to the largest possible use—that's your dare.

You have a wealth of possibilities, but maybe up to this time you have lacked a definite aim. You have a gun and plenty of ammunition. Now I dare you to aim at something worthy of the best that is in you.

My practical experience has convinced me that inner growth and broadening personality come from daring and sharing. You dare to use the talents you have. You find yourself growing stronger—physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. You multiply your daring a hundredfold by sharing its fruits. You give your life away and, behold! a richer life comes back to you.

Later in the same book, Mr. Danforth offers a challenging suggestion that is in line with the rule for personality development given in the previous chapter. He says:

Dare to live in the presence of the best. Try for one week to live a distinguished life, surrounding yourself with the very best the world has to offer. Read an excellent poem. Begin the biography of a distinguished man. Study a painting by an Old Master. Hear a best Victrola record. Listen to a classical radio program or a symphony. See an uplifting play or movie. Hear a stirring speaker. Meet an inspiring personality. See a sunrise and a sunset. Try to crowd out of your life unworthy thoughts, unworthy acts, unworthy contacts. Just see what will happen if, for a solid week, you fill your life only with the best!—the very best in literature, the very best in art, the very



best in nature. If only we would surround ourselves with the world's excellence, we would live like Kings!"

Often the first step in taking such a dare means going on with one's education. Seriously; not just dabbling at it or talking about doing it.

#### **EMPLOYERS APPROVE ORGANIZED STUDY**

Business keeps a hopeful eye on all employees who use some of their leisure to study subjects that will forward their business ambitions. I remember some years ago having to fill out a questionnaire handed out to all the employees of a company for which I was an executive. One of the questions on the check list went something like this: "What have you done in outside reading or study during the past year to improve your work and get yourself ready for the next job up?" The company that Mr. Danforth heads believes so strongly in growth for its employees that it pays half the cost of any course they take on the outside, provided the work is done for university credit.

#### **IN-SERVICE TRAINING COURSES OFFERED EMPLOYEES**

What are called "in-service training courses" are being offered to their employees by many business organizations. This is a development of the last few years and is growing fast. In the main the results are highly successful.

As an example, one Government Department has inaugurated, through its personnel division, extensive educational programs for its employees in various cities. I have before me a booklet describing eight courses that are being given under this plan in one large city. The courses range from a Secretarial Training Conference to one in Applied Psychology and include two courses in English, one in Conference Leadership, and another in Public Speaking. These courses are held between five and six o'clock and a fee of \$2 is charged for each. There is no compulsion regarding registration or attendance, but the courses have proved so helpful that the attendance is excellent.

I was impressed by the statement made by the personnel director that immediate improvement was apparent in the work of those employees who took the courses. The most marked improvement appeared to result from the Secretarial Training Conference. This probably is due to the fact that it is a discussion group. Strangely enough, the improvement in English of those who took this course was greater than that of those who enrolled in the English courses. The explanation seemed to be that free discussion of problems led these students to greater interest and more care in their regular work.

### **A COLLEGE EDUCATION IS NOT INDISPENSABLE**

I constantly meet people who feel inferior because of the lack of a college education. Business-school students frequently ask me, "Isn't it true that the best office jobs go to those who have degrees?" No, it is not true. In very few businesses do the office employees need more general education than they can get in a four-year academic high-school course. The broad general background which a college education should supply is not needed by the rank-and-file office worker. It is more of a personal than a business asset, except in those businesses or professions where the actual work is on the collegiate level, as in law, education, medicine, and various technical lines.

But if you wanted to go to college and couldn't, get busy and obtain a college education or its equivalent now. If a degree means all the world to you, now is the time to begin to work toward graduation, through evening classes or correspondence courses in university extension. Today anyone can have a college education who is willing to pay the price in time, effort, and the sacrifice of other interests.

### **YOU ARE AN ADULT—EDUCATE YOURSELF**

But there are many other ways of becoming better educated without taking university courses. Indeed, many a self-educated person would put many a college graduate to shame. The field

for self-education is unlimited, and the starting point is no farther away than the nearest library or bookstore. All you have to do is decide what you wish to study and, through the public library or your own purchase of books, embark upon your adventure. If you have that priceless gift, intellectual curiosity, your education will be a continuing process. You will be delving into new subjects all your life. Everything you see and hear will challenge you to learn about it through reading or observation. Nothing can prevent you from being educated in the best sense.

However, if you are among those who have not yet discovered the joy in books, and if reading seems a dull way to spend time, I suggest that you begin with success stories of real people. You will find them quite as exciting as lots of "boy-meets-girl" movies. And the achievements of others will, perhaps, give you stimulating ideas for your own success in life. Here is a brief list, suggestive of the type of easy reading to which I refer:

*Lives of Poor Boys Who Became Famous*, by Sarah Knowles Bolton

*Lives of Girls Who Became Famous*, by Sarah Knowles Bolton

*The Promised Land*, by Mary Antin

*Girls Who Did*, by Helen Ferris

*Girlhood Stories of Famous Women*, by Catherine Dunlap Cather

*Stories of Great Men Who Found Out*, by Annabel Williams-Ellis

*Men against Death*, by Paul De Kruif

*Miracle Hunters*, by Paul De Kruif

*Hunger Fighters*, by Paul De Kruif

Although you may have thought you were glad to be done with school, you will find that the studying you choose now for yourself will never seem dull and dreary, in the old school-day sense. Not only will you become interested in what you learn through reading, but one book will lead to another. If you have enjoyed the simpler books about interesting persons, why not embark upon more extensive biographies? You might start with any of the following:

*Marie Antoinette*, by Stefan Zweig  
*Queen Victoria*, by Lytton Strachey  
*Napoleon*, by Emil Ludwig  
*Benjamin Franklin*, by Carl Van Doren  
*Personal History*, by Vincent Sheean (autobiography)  
*T. E. Lawrence*, by his friends  
*Madame Curie*, by her daughter, Eve Curie  
*Yankee from Olympus*, by Catherine Drinker Bowen  
*The Lives of Winston Churchill*, by John Davenport and Charles  
J. V. Murphy  
*The Roosevelt I Knew*, by Frances Perkins.

Any librarian or any salesman in a bookstore will give you further suggestions if you indicate what sort of reading you would prefer. If your urge is to dig into a subject entirely unrelated to your work—the drama, Greek history, or a modern language—go to it.

#### TRAVEL IS EDUCATIONAL

Some of our much-traveled servicemen might argue this point. Recently I read an extract from a soldier's letter which said, "When I was a kid in school I used to love geography, but now that I'm seeing it, I don't think so much of it."

Be that as it may, one of the few good things the war did was to broaden, geographically, the perspective of our servicemen and of us stay-at-homes, as well. Guadalcanal, Tarawa, the Marianas, and scores of other points in the Pacific have become household words since our boys have been there. Who of us ever heard of Okinawa until the Marines landed on its beaches? Likewise, many an Italian, French, Dutch, or Belgian village of which we had never heard became a part of our daily conversation at one stage of the fighting. Although we may be armchair travelers, we must know something of the world our servicemen have seen and be able to talk intelligently about its geography, at least, when they tell us their experiences.

#### CREATE A BACKGROUND FOR YOURSELF

It is to be hoped, however, that you will actually go to other places and visit new scenes. One young woman I know fulfilled

her dream to travel beyond the borders of her native state, the first year she worked. By dint of much self-sacrifice she saved \$100 for her cherished trip and her first two weeks' vacation was spent exploring the greater part of two states. For some years, I have collected states and cities as a travel hobby, and it is a red-letter day when I find myself in a spot I have never seen before. To get about in these United States is both great fun and a liberal education.

Often the cheapest places to eat in large cities are in the foreign quarters. I know a group of businesswomen whose jobs have to do with preparing the appetizing foods illustrated in magazine advertisements. Once a month they have a group dinner meeting, and one year all their meetings were held in foreign restaurants. The list included Chinese, Italian, Serbian, Kosher, French, Swedish, German, Mexican, and Russian eating places. Who shall say these enterprising women whose jobs force them to "stay put," have not traveled? Traveling, after all, can be a state of mind, and among interesting, wide-awake people there are fewer and fewer stay-at-homes.

As was suggested earlier in this chapter, one way to develop a capacity for living is planning and achieving a successful social life. Marjory Hillis, in her delightful book, *Live Alone and Like It*, makes this seem impossibly easy, even on a small salary. Nevertheless, the objective of an apartment of one's own and a satisfying social life is dear to the heart of many thoroughly feminine business girls. For there are many girls and women in business who get little out of their jobs beyond their pay checks. They are primarily domestic. They want to cook and keep house and have their friends in. They long to wear pretty hostess gowns and dinner and evening clothes. More power to them! If this description fits you, the thing to do is to concentrate your efforts on achieving and enjoying all these things as soon as possible. The sooner you have them the less uninspiring your job will seem and the better employee you will automatically become. And of course, the better employee you are, the sooner the increased salary to pay for your heart's desire! Surely this

is a happier prospect than that of the young woman who does nothing with her hated job to make it seem more bearable.

### THE OBLIGATION OF CITIZENSHIP

No young American's life can be well rounded until he or she begins to take the responsibilities of citizenship into account. Remember, the good American way of life is the result of the individual thought and action of the millions of men and women who have cast their votes since our country became the United States. The America of tomorrow depends upon what you do about it today. It may even be that the world of tomorrow depends upon how young America thinks and acts.

Young America has won the fighting end of a costly war. Out of its ranks must come the leaders who will guide the nation into the second half of a century unsurpassed for importance in all history. An enduring peace can be achieved only through wise and strong leadership and an intelligent, informed citizenry.

"What can I do?" you ask. Much. You can register as soon as you are twenty-one. You can take an intelligent interest in municipal, state, and national elections and express your convictions through your vote. You can keep informed on both domestic and international issues, many of which are closely bound up with the problems of peace. A position of world leadership has been imposed upon the United States, not only through our military might, but through our industrial strength, unsurpassed wealth, and democratic ideals. This means that each of us is now not only an American citizen but a citizen of the world. As such, we must strive to know and understand other peoples. Within our own borders we must actively discourage discrimination against any person or group because of race, color, or creed. Our victory has proved, as President Truman so aptly stated, that "A society of self-governing men is more powerful, more enduring, more creative than any other kind of society, however centralized." To hold perpetually the fruits of our hard-won victory, each of us has the responsibility for maintaining that ideal democracy.

**BEGIN NOW TO CRYSTALLIZE A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE**

In addition to all these interests, you may feel strongly the need for a philosophy of life. It may seem to you that you are not living fully until you have opened up your spiritual windows. If you deplore the inattention to spiritual qualities that is prevalent in this modern age, by all means do something about it. Do not rest until you find something impersonal outside yourself to which you can turn.

Different individuals find the answer to this deep need in varying ways. Some find it in religion. Others turn to an ideal of truth. Still others find help in contemplating the order and the beauty of the Universe. Many stumble along until middle age before they find the answer that satisfies them.

As a starter to guide you in this topsy-turvy world, perhaps there is no better philosophy than that which follows the Golden Rule. In modern life this means kindness, generosity, and forbearance, remembering always that each individual has a right to his own way of life and his own point of view. Whatever philosophy you evolve for yourself as you experience life, you will never have to discard kindness and tolerance as a fixed principle of conduct. Organized brutality, which ridiculed these simple, homely virtues, was unable to dim them. More than ever we know that character is worth working for. To become a well-organized, stable person is the great responsibility life places upon each of us. Our happiness depends upon this self-organization, and so does our *real* success.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Are employers interested in how their employees spend their time after leaving work? If so, why?
2. Why do many firms now insist that all incoming employees take a physical examination?
3. What relation does a routine of eight hours of sleep and three balanced meals a day bear to the successful holding of a job?
4. Do you think that a married woman who works in an office is justified in putting her home duties first? If not, why not?

5. Why is daily exercise in the open air especially recommended for office workers? How can two hours of outdoor exercise be gained?

6. Will a few summer week ends at the beach or occasional participation in winter sports put one in physical shape for the whole year?

7. Should hobbies be closely related to one's work?

8. Do you consider weaving or modeling in clay the best types of hobby for office workers? If not, suggest some other hobbies you think would be better.

9. If you can't afford to travel, should you consider the reading of travel books a waste of time?

10. Why does a hobby make one a more interesting person?

11. How can young working people away from home make friends? Do they need friends, or should a good job be enough?

12. Why do you think it is that many employers offer study courses for their employees? Why do such employers consider continued study important?

13. What are the most usual methods of outside study among young business people?

14. Is it possible for one who works eight hours a day to get a college education? What does such a program call for, besides time and study?

15. Why is it important that every young American should take his responsibilities of citizenship seriously? Why should he register and vote?

16. If your boss told you how he wanted you to vote, would you feel that you had to follow his instructions? If not, why not?

17. Should religion be discussed around the office? If not, why not?

18. Do you think that successful living off the job will help to make for success on the job?

### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. A personnel director spoke for many employers when she said, "What business wants is the right person living at his (or her) best at all times."

Do you think this is asking too much of employees?

2. Explain what has caused employers to become so particular about the health and living habits of their employees.

3. When an employee organizes his outside life so as to live more fully, who do you think gains most from this organization—the individual or the employer?



4. Discuss what relationship eight hours of sleep and three square meals a day bear to one's success on the job.

In developing this idea take into consideration those employees who burn the candle at both ends and eat with little regard for their bodily requirements.

5. Name several hobbies in which you are interested. Discuss whether any of them would fit into your life if you were a bookkeeper. If you were a receptionist, meeting people all day.

6. Discuss why it is important that hobbies be play.

7. Discuss what a well-chosen hobby might have done for David Grier. Do you think that joining a club and meeting young people his own age might have brought about a better organization of David's outside life and fitted him to hold his job?

8. Do you agree with the statement, "When one goes too far in recreation it becomes dissipation"?

9. Discuss the statement in this chapter, "The America of tomorrow depends upon what you do about it today." Can young people neglect their duties as citizens and expect to have a democracy that will work? Can they safely leave to politicians the responsibility of safeguarding their rights as citizens? Why is it imperative that young people register and vote? That they take an active interest in political and economic problems?

### PROJECTS

1. Assume that you have a stenographic position at which you work five days a week. Your office hours are from eight to five. It takes you half an hour to reach your office. You live at home and have a pleasant circle of friends. Your salary is \$30 a week.

Work out a time schedule for the hours you spend away from the office. State what time you will get up, what time you will go to bed, at what hours you will eat. Allow time for exercise, hobbies, fun with friends, and some educational pursuits. This schedule should show how you will spend your Saturdays and Sundays as well as your evenings.

2. Plan a talk for class on the advantage of having not just one hobby horse but a whole stable full. Cover the question of whether one's hobbies should be related, or whether contrasting ones should be chosen for greater variety. Mention some hobbies that could easily grow out of others.

3. Although that may not be their original purpose, some hobbies have vocational possibilities. List five avocations or interests that could

grow into full-time jobs. Have you a leisure-time pursuit that might some day develop into an occupation? If so, trace the necessary stages of study, working at your hobby, and perfecting your skill before you could expect to earn a living at it.

4. Through travel, Helen Whitlock has made herself an interesting and stimulating person. Although Helen has only two weeks' vacation each year, she plans trips that can be made in that time. Right now, Helen is reading up on Yucatan and saving her money to go there. She owns many books on the relics of the Mayan civilization and can speak interestingly of the excavations at Chichen Itzá. Even if Helen never makes this trip, the preparation for it has broadened her.

Select a place you would like to visit, find out what the trip would cost and how long it would take. List the available books that would give you the needed information to get the most out of the trip. Be prepared to talk about this proposed trip to the class.

5. Choose a book from the reading list given in this chapter. Read it and prepare a brief review for class.



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